

Choose your own
Path

Drama in 5 acts

By

1857

CHOOSE YOUR OWN PATH;

OR,

THE PREDESTINARIAN :

A Drama,

IN FIVE ACTS.

LONDON:
PARTRIDGE AND CO., PATERNOSTER ROW.

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Dramatis Personæ.

MEN.

VON HEYNE, *a Student of Heidelberg.*

FRANTZ REICHARDT, *his Friend, a Merchant.*

VON RIESENSTEIN.

MÜLDER, CURSCHMANN, OTTO,	} <i>Companions of VON HEYNE.</i>
PHILIP, FIRST and SECOND	
STUDENTS,	

COUNT OF ALTENBERG.

WEISSENFELS, *his Steward.*

BAUER, GOTTLIEB, WILHELM, UMFRID *and other Servants.*

WOMEN.

HELENE VON RIESENSTEIN.

THERESA, *her Cousin, married to FRANTZ REICHARDT.*

MADAME BLÜMENTHAL, *Sister to VON RIESENSTEIN.*

AGATHA, GERTRUDE. *Attendants.*

ERRATA.

Page 13, line 11, for “ *an* hereafter,” read “ *a* hereafter.”

Page 59, line 19. read “ *former* debts ” instead of “ *formal* debts.”

CHOOSE YOUR OWN PATH;

OR,

THE PREDESTINARIAN.

ACT THE FIRST.

SCENE 1.

Apartment in the Castle of Altenberg.

Enter COUNT and WEISSENFELS.

COUNT.

Come hither, Weissenfels; if your affairs
Will give you leisure now, I'd speak with you
In confidence awhile. You've served me long,
We have grown old together; and, till now,
Time that most surely shows men's hidden natures,
Hath shown no faults of graver kind in you.
Not even from that day when first I saw you,
Have I known aught should lessen or prevent
That trust, that confidence, of which, I think,
You have the daily proof: is it not so?

WEISSENFELS.

I have striven in my duty, my good lord,
To Heaven and you; both have rewarded me.
On me, age lightly lays his heavy hand;

Your benefits exceed my best deserving.
 If all unfaithful servants, being such,
 Lose but a tithe of such a recompence,
 They do but study to undo themselves.

COUNT.

You know, till now your service still has been
 To note the common duties of your trust.
 But now, a moment, lay those duties by,
 And, for a brief while, speak as to an equal.
 Say would you prove as earnest, as sincere,
 In some advice I fain would ask of you,
 While seeking to confirm a doubtful mind,
 As I have ever found you heretofore
 In all I have committed to your charge ?

WEISSENFELS.

My lord, you know I am an untaught man,
 In questions of great moment quite unskilled ;
 Nor fit to be, in these, your counsellor.
 But if sincerity and truth of purpose
 May stand, perchance, in place of higher gifts,
 I will endeavour to discharge the task.
 I have no other claims.

COUNT.

These will suffice.
 Now to the matter ; briefly thus it is :
 You know, none better, what my fortunes are,
 That they have long been far beyond my need,
 So that my worldly store hath still increased ;
 That I have broad domains, and different kinds
 Of treasure, even here, within these walls.
 You know I have no child : my only son
 Withered and died within your own remembrance ;
 And all my early friends have long gone hence,
 And those I see around take not their place
 In my affections ; and my kindred few,

Seem kin in blood alone; strange in aught else,
 And dwell in distant lands; or have been cold,
 Selfish, or sordid; and—I love them not.
 Yet still we know that man's appointed time
 Is but a span, and that we always stand
 At best upon the verge; that I am old
 And may go hence each hour; when this shall be,
 I would not leave this question unresolved
 Of—who shall be my heir.

[*He looks enquiringly at WEISSENFELS and pauses. WEISSENFELS appears surprised, reflects a moment, then answers slowly and hesitatingly.*]

WEISSENFELS.

Perhaps, my lord,
 The church, the poor, some noble edifice
 Largely endowed (*Count shakes his head*), or say some private
 man,
 (For there are men of known philanthropy)
 Who, with discerning eye, and careful hand,
 Might deal around much good, as you have done,
 And thus continue here what you've begun.

COUNT.

Men rarely take a counsellor to aid them
 In things like this; are you not thinking thus?
 Yet that last thought you uttered has been mine;
 And, for those other two, I like them not.
 Surely the church can need no further store,
 For most she hath is given where each one
 Hath far more than the first three score and ten,
 Who taught the doctrine first; and so 'twould be
 If this were now increased by ten times more,
 For it has ever been: and for the poor,
 Of those who most do need, all do not beg,
 Nor go in tatter'd garments; for the third,
 Say have you ever met with such a man
 As he whom you have just described to me?

WEISSENFELS.

I scarce do know, indeed. There have been men
 Who have, in former stations, borne them well ;
 And have been wise and temperate, just and true ;
 But raised too suddenly to Fortune's height
 Have cast aside their former characters,
 And thereupon have shown themselves profuse,
 Capricious, vain, unjust, proud, and forgetful,
 Where fair occasions tempted soon to ill,
 And showed, the power was wanting, not the will.

COUNT.

Yet still, if I mistake not, you do think,
 E'en now, on some of whom you fain would speak,
 And doubt, perhaps, my serious intent.
 Now tell me frankly, do you know one man
 Of greater seeming worth than most of those
 Whom you have seen about me ? Answer me :
 I do not seek a man who cannot err—
 None such is to be found.

WEISSENFELS.

You'd have me name
 A man of rank or station ?

COUNT.

Any man
 Whom I have ever seen, here or elsewhere,
 Of whom I yet know aught, or may search out,
 If that his ways be juster than his fellows.

WEISSENFELS.

This is a question far too grave for me.
 Indeed, my lord, the most that I may venture
 Is, to recall to your remembrance
 Some few whom I have seen you deign to notice
 With marks of some approval as I thought ;
 In whom my judgment has confirmed your own (*pausing*).

You know that sometimes you have entertained,
In mere benevolence, or pride of rank,
Or not to seem a niggard of your wealth,
A crowd of stranger visitors or friends
From far and near, of different rank and fortune,
Though these occasions have of late been rare.
'Tis scarce a twelvemonth past, I think, there came,
In company with others of his age,
One who had sometimes been your guest before,
Whose speech and action marked him from the rest ;
Though skilled, as they, in all the trifling arts
Of pastime and amusement ; gentle too,
Though of a proud reserve, and doubtful manner,
To some of those who seemed not of his friends.
And sometimes would he meditate apart,
And seemed to harbour secret discontent ;
'Gainst which some better feeling still would strive.
He, and some other few, remained awhile
Your daily guests. Often I marked him then,
And sometimes crossed him in his daily walks,
Often conversed he with the neighbouring poor ;
And now he would relieve some petty want ;
Now argue learnedly upon their state,
And teach them how to bear it with content.

COUNT.

Yes, yes ! I know of whom you speak ; proceed.

WEISSENFELS.

I know but little more, further than this :
I do remember to have overheard,
So placed I could not well avoid the hearing,
Some words which passed between the man I speak of
And one who was his friend. As they both stood
Looking from out a deep embayed window
Upon these rich and fertile lands around,
The latter gave an utterance to his thought
In some such words as these, if I forget not.

“ Ah ! ” cried he, “ that I had the power of some
 To deal around so much of good or ill ;
 To raise my friend, defeat mine enemy,
 To strip presumption of advantages
 And lend them to desert, to equalize
 These general means of happiness, and play
 The part of Providence as man might play it !
 Say, were not this a noble scheme, my friend ? ”

COUNT.

Indeed ! What said the other in reply ?

WEISSENFELS.

The other passed his hand across his brow,
 On which a frown had gathered as he listened,
 And seemed like one who communes with himself ;
 Then, with a calmer air, he made reply.
 “ I do believe,” he said, “ to each is given
 To show the same nobility of purpose,
 According to his lot. Be you but true
 To your own doctrine : justify the right ;
 Resist all wrong, in act or principle ;
 Refuse the homage arrogance exacts ;
 Pay it, unmasked, where'er you find 'tis due ;
 Do this, and half your wish is had already ;
 For Providence gives ev'ry man some share
 In working out its ends.” I stood surprised
 To hear such words from one so young as he,
 And thought it might be such a one as this
 Would justify good fortune, should it fall
 Upon him ever.

COUNT.

’Twas but natural
 You should think thus.

WEISSENFELS.

As I observed, my lord,
 Changed fortunes oftentimes do make changed men ;

It might be so with this. I would not, therefore,
 Take on me such responsibility
 To say this man, or that, or any one,
 Would dignify the fortunes that you speak of.
 'Tis you yourself, my lord, that must decide,
 And you alone, in matters such as this,
 To whom you would bequeath such benefits,
 According to their station, and deserving,
 If that it be, indeed, you have no kin
 To whom you think you owe remembrance.

COUNT.

No, no! enough!—years since—I was resolved—
 I must confess, besides, this thought of yours
 Does, by a strange kind of coincidence,
 Answer to some half-entertained ideas
 Which lately have been mine. Yet have I heard—
 This man, though of a free benevolence
 Of nature, is yet wavering of purpose,
 Froward and strange at times, and has not wooed
 Fair fortune like most others! Yet 'tis true
 I have oft noted him approvingly.
 And once he did me certain service, too,
 By skill he had acquired in pharmacy,
 With which he cured me of a ling'ring pain,
 And still refused all offer of reward.
 This I would not forget (*enter a Servant*)—Well! Bauer, what
 Would you with us?

SERVANT.

My lord, I'm sent to say,
 Your chaplain waits, as you appointed him.

COUNT.

Is it the hour? Well, say that I will come. [*exit Servant.*]
 (to WEISSENFELS.) We'll speak again of this: as you have
 heard,
 My chaplain waits for me; to him I go

To speak of many things of grave import,
 The which I have neglected much of late.
 And these autumnal months, when leaves fall around me,
 Remind me that my harvest may be near,
 When I must hope to reap but as I 've sown.
 Our latest years on earth gather more grace,
 If a reflection of our coming state
 Doth tinge them. Now, good night !

WEISSENFELS.

Good night, my lord.

[*Exeunt severally.*]

SCENE 2.

The Mountain of the Kaiserstuhl, overlooking the City of Heidelberg. Enter VON HEYNE and FRANTZ REICHARDT.

VON HEYNE.

Well, Reichardt, now our friends have quitted us,
 Tell me what was this that you would have said
 Before we met with them thus suddenly?
 Some grave advice, I think.

FRANTZ.

Ay ! you remind me ;
 I was about to say that I, a somewhat
 Older and graver man, have marked in you
 Some of those higher gifts and dispositions
 Which it were well you turned to better purpose,
 Than just to pass away a merry hour
 In such companionship as this we've left.
 'Twas well enough at first. But time is passing.
 Seek out some nobler end ; choose some career
 In which to win a station worthy of you ;
 Or play, at least, the useful citizen.
 Our friendship gives me privilege, I think,
 To speak thus frankly.

VON HEYNE.

Well, we'll say it does ;
What would you have? What must I do to win
Some better fortune, or a higher name?
I do confess, in honest confidence,
I'd mend the latter could I see the way.

FRANTZ.

Oh, there are many ways, Von Heyne; choose one.

VON HEYNE.

You think so, having found the way yourself.

FRANTZ.

Am I alone in that? Are there not others?

VON HEYNE.

Not in your fortunes are you singular,
But in your calm content you seem alone.
I look around upon the many men
Who strive in vain to mount the upward road
That leads to fortune, and upon the few
Whose lot has been success, and, of these latter,
Most seem to miss their aim of happiness
Whose gratified ambition yields it not.
No, Frantz, I cannot strive for ends like these ;
Let me enjoy the present as I may,
And trust to my good fortune for the future.

FRANTZ.

What! is pre-eminence so useless then?
Does Heav'n send men wisdom, wit, and talent,
Health, strength, benevolence, aptitude for good
Of any kind, beyond their fellow-men,
That they may then ungratefully sink back
Into the general crowd, ignore their gifts,
Bury the talent first, and then forget it?

VON HEYNE.

Some of those talents might be sterling metal,
 But cannot always be converted to
 Such goods of fortune as you'd have me seek ;
 For they are like some star or cross of honour
 That your mere trader holds at little worth ;
 We can but wear them, and may not exchange ;
 And, for the rest, what if we strive to gain
 A name or station higher than our fellows ?
 How many accidents step in to rob us
 Of our just right ? And even when 'tis gained,
 What is the end ? What has it always been ?
 Why, turn the page of history and find
 Still the old lesson, that ambition yields
 No happiness but in expectancy.
 Those who'd gained empires quarrelled for a straw,
 And found, at last, that all which they had won
 Was not that which they wanted ; so that some,
 When greatness fell from them, began again
 There whence they started, only to discover
 Means of contentment had lurked nearer to them
 Than they had dreamed of.

FRANTZ.

Well ! this may be so.
 There are, sometimes, who overleap the mark ;
 But let us aim, no less for that, to reach it.
 There is no middle course : he who stands still
 Is slighted soon and trodden under foot
 By the on-pressing crowd.

VON HEYNE.

Ay, if he be not equal to his hour
 To stem, as best he may, the rushing tide,
 Until some current bear him safe ashore.

FRANTZ.

Once more, what is your drift ? Speak to me plainly.

VON HEYNE.

Did not your speech imply, a moment since,
That nature, from the first, gives various means
To different men?

FRANTZ.

None ever doubted this.

VON HEYNE.

And as I said, have there not sometimes been
Those who have reached at last their highest aim,
And found the prize a blank?

FRANTZ.

What inference

Draw you from this?

VON HEYNE.

That this same Providence
Which sends forth men into the general world
Distinguished from the rest, has some intent
Deeper than that which men are apt to think ;
And that intended destinies await them,
Meant by Omniscience for them at first,
Which they, in their perverse free agency,
Do often start from in mere stubbornness
To choose them out some end not meant for them.

FRANTZ.

What! are you one of those, then, who believe
The fate of every man is pre-ordained?
Dismiss the error; many, true, have held it,
Even of our best and greatest; though, most often
It prompted into action, which in you
Leads but to apathy; but yet, believe me,
They carved their destiny while they but thought
They followed it: dismiss so wild a creed,
Or say why here, upon the Kaiserstuhl,

We should not stand together and await
 The will of Providence, while those below
 Are toiling, in a thousand ways, to meet it.
 Come, waste no longer thought on such a theme :
 The night is drawing near ; let us descend.

VON HEYNE.

I'll leave you for awhile. I would reflect
 Upon your counsel.

FRANTZ.

Well, let it be so ;
 To-morrow I will seek you out to know
 How I may serve you ; now, farewell !

VON HEYNE.

Farewell !

[They take hands and part. Exit FRANTZ, left. VON HEYNE remains for a moment looking off at left, then comes slowly forward.]

VON HEYNE (*solus*).

'Tis as he said, the night is drawing near ;
 I look down towards the valley, and I see
 A misty vapour rising from the ground
 Which seems to thicken still. How shall I end
 The day begun in listless indolence ?
 Rest longer in this solitary place,
 And hold grave, silent converse with my thoughts ?
 Or mingle with the busy crowd below,
 And with realities of life make clear
 This brain, just now too much pre-occupied,
 And filled with imagery words and names ?
 There are some things we judge most soundly of
 By viewing them from far ; draw we more near,
 The view is less complete : so with this life,
 Reflected by a mass of simple things,
 We draw conclusions just, but lose ourselves

In the effect and cause. This rising mist
Arrests the fancy by some unknown power.
O'er rock, and tree, and stream, it throws a veil,
Rend'ring each moment still more indistinct
That which was faint before ; and things which now
Seemed common and familiar to the eye
Take a strange charm, from their resemblance
To the unreal, to something we have heard
Or dreamed of, till we doubt if this can be
Some half-lost memory of a former state
Or vision, half revealed ; of an hereafter ;
Or but some mist and vapour of the mind,
Some pleasing day-dream ; rend'ring that which is,
By a strange union with what might be,
More flattering to our hopes ; whose happiness
Mingles with shadows some reality,
More beautiful, because not all untrue ;
Yet more alluring in the added false,
Like friendship, glory, love, faith in our kind,
Uncertainties and playthings of the mind,
Which now we scoff at, like bold infidels ;
Then, half believing, entertain, by turns.
Beautiful mists ! still spread your strange, wild charm
O'er flow'r and herb ; and o'er my doubting heart
Rise not, unless that to mine anxious view
Ye can unfold some scene both bright and true.
Stay ! linger yet ! I seek to know no more ;
Better uncertain sea than rocky shore.
I have no will to grasp futurity.
This hour be mine, whate'er the next may be.

[*Exit ; scene closes.*]

SCENE 3.

*Heidelberg. Apartment in the house of VON RIESENSTEIN.
Night. An open window, near it a table with lights.
Harpsichord, pictures, including a portrait of the COUNT
ALTENBERG, as in the first scene, but younger. Enter
HELENE and THERESA.*

THERESA.

Dear Helene, is not this still and quiet evening a contrast to the last ?

HELENE.

It is, indeed ; I am glad we have not many such.

THERESA.

Of which kind do you speak ?

HELENE.

Oh ! yesterday.

THERESA.

I am surprised, indeed, to hear you say so. I should have rather thought that you were proud of your conquests.

HELENE.

And what were they ? Pray tell me.

THERESA.

Oh, there were many men, of different ranks, you know, who could not disguise their admiration.

HELENE.

Well, it did appear indeed as though my father meant to hold open house to all comers. Did you ever before see such a medley ?

THERESA.

No, indeed! Firstly, there were those few men of rank whose friendship the baron, I suppose, thinks may prove useful to him; and then a plentiful sprinkling of the youth of this city, of no rank at all.

HELENE.

You mean, of painters, poets, musicians, students, and others of that kind?

THERESA.

Yes. I hope you found sufficient variety amongst them. You sometimes complain of too great a sameness.

HELENE.

Oh! that was not the fault here, indeed.

THERESA.

No; our guests had various means of rendering themselves agreeable and entertaining. Some of the younger students seemed to think, by their manner of dancing, that they were at a fair. Some of them drank wine and then quarrelled. There was a priest, too, I think, who enforced his doctrine by quoting Greek authors to a student who jested profanely in plain German. And a travelled gentleman, in another part, who sang an Italian song, which I could not hear for the shouts of a painter, who was describing a sunset.

HELENE.

You seem, at least by your description, to have been an attentive observer; and were, doubtless, well entertained?

THERESA.

And you, fair lady? Amongst so many, you did not fail to observe some few who had greater merit than the rest?

HELENE.

There might be so, indeed; 'tis very likely.

THERESA.

As, for instance, a more attentive eye and ear than the rest; a well-tuned voice, skilful in few words to convey deep meaning.

HELENE.

I saw none such, indeed; what nonsense are you now talking, Theresa?

THERESA.

Who was that stranger who came with Frantz, my husband? I have forgotten his name, but yet I did not think that you had overlooked him.

HELENE.

Oh! as you say, a stranger, whom some of our friends seemed scarcely by their manner to welcome, which, Von Riesenstein being engaged elsewhere, threw on me more of the burden of his entertainment, and, as you saw, of many others'.

THERESA.

A graceful condescension truly, and which you must have found a sad trial of your good breeding.

HELENE.

Oh! yes, it was indeed; enough of that.

THERESA.

Well! well! I'll say no more. (*Looking round.*) Tell me, Helene, whose is that portrait which hangs behind you? I have already heard you name the rest; but whose is this?

HELENE.

The one on horseback do you mean, in plated armour?

THERESA.

Oh! no; pray let me hear no more of ancestors; I mean the other on the right.

HELENE.

What see you more in that than in the rest?

THERESA.

There is, I think, a more noble look in this, than in the others. There were some of your guests, I believe, who thought the same.

HELENE.

How? have any spoken to you of it?

THERESA.

No one; but yet I chanced last night to see two of the strangers stand looking on it. One of them was he of whom I spoke just now. Whose is the portrait?

HELENE.

I believe that it is one of my father's many relatives, with whom, years since, while I was yet a child, he had some cause of quarrel. 'Tis all I know of the matter; yet you can ask him for yourself.

THERESA.

Heaven forbid! If it be anything to make him angry, I have done. (*Crossing to the window, HELENE follows.*) How mild and calm this autumn evening is; and yet, how dark! Not a leaf stirring, scarce a footstep. Stay! what was that?

[*A few chords of music, as if struck upon a guitar, are heard from below the window.*]

HELENE (*retiring from the window*).

You had better leave the window, Theresa; the lights within may else attract the attention of strangers, who, for

want of better amusement, may find their way into the grounds beneath, and offer you their homage in some effusion—inspired, perhaps, by a recent visit to the wine-house.

THERESA.

You are contemptuous this evening, fair lady; how can you tell whom it may be—if, indeed, there be any one? There, again, listen!

[They remain seated near the window, while the following is sung from beneath.]

SERENADE.

The veil of night environs me,
My gaze to yonder heaven I rear;
One pure calm-beaming light I see,
I bend the knee and breathe a prayer.
My heart-strung vows to thee they fly;
Dost hear them, love, enthroned so high?

When dark hours pass, morn beams on me
'Mid skies serene and flow'rets fair,
Till one on yonder bank I see
Whose bloom transcends the fairest there.
Ah! sweetest flow'r of all the field,
Wilt thou to me thy perfume yield?

THERESA.

There! will you tell me now that was the voice of a mere tavern reveller? But did you hear?

HELENE.

Indeed, you seem determined that I shall. If you are satisfied, pray come away!

THERESA.

Well, see! I have closed the window, and the singer, whoever he be, is gone. You think, perhaps, Von Riesen-stein might hear, and say we might be better employed.

Do not fear; he is dreaming over some state employment or new favour at court, and cares nothing, believe me, for so small a matter as a song.

HELENE.

It is full time, then, that we broke in upon his meditations. Come! it grows late and my father expects us.

THERESA.

I have scarce courage for the interview. Well, if it must be.

[*Exeunt.*]

END OF ACT THE FIRST.

ACT THE SECOND.

SCENE 1.

Heidelberg. A Room in the Tavern of the Kaiser's Head ; tables with bottles, glasses, lights, &c. MULDER, CURSCHMANN, VON HEYNE, OTTO, and certain Students, discovered seated at the tables and drinking.

MULDER.

This was well met, my friends, as it chanced. I am right glad to see so many worthy and distinguished comrades round me, known, for the most part, throughout all Heidelberg. If there be any truth in the old proverb that we should know a man by his friends, the conclusion is most flattering to me.

CURSCHMANN.

Ha ! ha ! our friend Mulder grows too complimentary to our little reputations. Truth in wine ! Another glass or two, and we shall hear his whole thought upon these matters ; and, perchance, upon a few others.

MULDER.

Curschmann, we see, has already reached the truthful stage of wine. Go you to the confessional to-night, Curschmann ?

VON HEYNE.

If he but make clean breast, the priest will listen to a pleasant story.

CURSCHMANN.

No ! my story will be a simple one, and something like this : Oh ! holy Father, from all those sins wherein the

grosser kind of men do abound—as gaming, drinking deep, swearing, lying, faults relating to women, running into debt, fighting, and slandering our neighbours—I was, till lately, if not quite free, yet somewhat better than your common kind of men. But none are perfect, and, truth to say, I am lately much given to another sin, which leads to all these. I grieve to say, I am of late much fallen into the love of evil company—the company of the vicious. There is Mulder and Von Heyne, Otto, and the rest, who do all these, and would fain appear as saints to those who know them not.

VON HEYNE.

Oh! the holy Father will sympathize with thee, Curschmann. Thou wilt receive absolution. It is an error which does greatly prevail with his more regular communicants. Besides, your difficulty has become his own, since certain lords have betaken themselves to the confessional.

CURSCHMANN.

Are we to discuss points of faith? or shall we not rather drink and tell our adventures?

MULDER.

Oh! let us leave discussion to those who doubt, and empty our flasks like men of firm convictions. Come! a health to our friends, and confusion to the rest.

[*Enter FRANTZ REICHARDT.*]

FRANTZ.

A charitable wish, truly! Good morrow, friends.

MULDER.

Ha! is it thou? Thou art not one of us; yet thou art welcome. Wilt thou drink?

FRANTZ.

Ay! I will join you for once.

[*He shakes hands with VON HEYNE, and seats himself at a table.*]

MULDER.

Well ! dost thou still sacrifice to Fortune ? And doth the jade still smile upon thee ? Beware ! for she is fickle.

FRANTZ.

Not so ! she is not angry long, Mulder, believe me, with those who know how, with a bold and steady hand, to grasp her.

MULDER.

Well ! I, for one, care little. Dame Fortune is to me as a capricious mistress ; and, when it pleaseth her ladyship to smile *à la bonne heure*, I am right ready to be friends again. But, for her frowns, they touch me not. (*To FRANTZ*) Come ! give us a health.

FRANTZ.

No ; let us all drink round, and each a health according to his fancy.

OTTO.

Good ! I will begin. Here's to good-fellowship !

[*Drinks.*]

FIRST STUDENT.

Here's to good wine ! 'Tis that that makes the fellowship.

[*Drinks.*]

CURSCHMANN.

Indeed, you are both right. Here's to the loveliest woman in Heidelberg !

[*Drinks.*]

SECOND STUDENT.

That's the landlord's daughter here, close by ; at the Black Horse.

FIRST STUDENT.

His wife, you mean ?

CURSCHMANN.

Silence, both! you talk nothing but pot-house. Tell me, Mulder, who was that lady whom some of you were praising this very morning, as we saw her pass? I drink to none but her.

MULDER.

Oh! the daughter of Von Riesenstein, a right noble and worthy gentleman, my patron and near neighbour, although our dwellings differ somewhat in style of architecture. Well, I have seen her some twice or thrice, and at her father's house, too; for men of different fortunes, as we know, are entertained by the ostentatious baron, for the which I and others of my friends are truly his humble servants. For the lady, she is fair—a trifle proud or so, they say; and, moreover, hath had more songs made in her praise, and wine drunk in her name, than I can tell you of.

CURSCHMANN.

Well! to her I drink, be she as haughty as Juno, hard-hearted as the flint. I see her perfections, and will not take her faults upon report.

SECOND STUDENT.

Enough! enough! a song.

FRANTZ.

Well thought of; who will sing?

CURSCHMANN.

Not I, to-night.

SECOND STUDENT.

Nor I.

FIRST STUDENT.

For me, gentlemen, you must hold me excused. As your French writer says, "the brutality of the weather has done great injustice to the natural delicacy of my voice."

MULDER.

Yes; that, and three bottles or so. Sing you, Von Heyne.

VON HEYNE.

No; let our youngest comrade do his part. (*He claps upon the shoulder a young student who is sitting by him, and taking no part in the conversation*). Come, Philip, we have drunk for you to-night; sing you for us.

CURSCHMANN.

Ay, Philip, sing!

OTTO.

Come! no refusal.

SECOND STUDENT.

Gentlemen, let him sing, or drink two bottles.

OMNES.

Hear, hear!

PHILIP.

I'd rather sing than drink, if it must be.

VON HEYNE (*rising*).

Stay! take an instrument. They used to keep a cittern in this chamber. Oh! here it is (*an instrument like a guitar is brought*). Know you the use of this?

PHILIP.

Well! I will try what little skill I have, for I would not willingly trust my unaided voice to the judgment of such a company. Besides, I sing not in any foreign tongue; so shall my faults the more hardly escape you.

VON HEYNE.

Come begin; a brisk air and a merry one.

OTTO.

The song of the soldier's life, or of the wandering gipsy.

PHILIP.

Gentlemen, I know none of these ; and so, be my song sad or merry, you must, perforce, content you.

FRANTZ.

Right ; let the singer choose.

MULDER (*turning away and sitting down*).

Well, then, let your song be sad. So shall you send a band of pot-companions to their knees presently, and idle love-stories. Come ! let us hear your ballad.

[*Philip comes forward to the front : the rest remain seated.*]

SONG.

What is joy ? Not laughter's madness.

Is it found where riches shine ?

Doth the wine-cup bring me gladness ?

No ! my love ;—the power is thine :

When thy truth-beaming gaze meets mine,

I feel it !

Then beating heart and glist'ning eyne

Reveal it.

What is grief ? whence comes my sorrow ?

Wintry storms that round me blow,

Fortune's frowns, who smiles to-morrow,

Can these bring me sadness ? No !

When thy cold look bids love to fly,

I feel it !

Then quiv'ring lip and tearful eye

Reveal it !

MULDER.

We thank thee for thy music. Orpheus himself worked not such wonders. See, thy listeners have left drinking, and

are fallen, as I think, to their prayers. Come sit, and we will drink thy mistress' health.

OTTO.

First let us know, if she be dark, or fair.

CURSCHMANN.

Blue eyes, or black, or brown?

OMNES.

Name, name !

FIRST STUDENT.

We'll drink her health first, and listen to her praises afterwards. But stay! the flasks are empty. There were more toasts, I think, by many than I heard of.

VON HEYNE.

We'll call for more. Here, Kellner! bring more wine.
[*Calling.*]

FIRST STUDENT.

Stay! let me go. I know the landlord and the cellar.
[*Rising.*]

MULDER.

That's true enough. Well, go you and choose for us. This last is mine.

[*Exit FIRST STUDENT.*]

CURSCHMANN.

Why, Mulder, whom have you cheated at cards lately, that you drink Rhine wine to-night?

OTTO.

Oh, no! he loses at cards. I believe, rather, that his last picture has found a purchaser.

CURSCHMANN.

Ha! who was your victim this time? and what was the

subject? Was it an Italian cut-throat, or a Flemish fish-woman? a Grecian temple, or a Dutch dyke? Which school do you follow lately?

MULDER.

None of these: I study nearer home, and have been but lately employed upon a new subject entitled, "The Priest and the Penitent; or, Six of one and Half-a-dozen of the other."

CURSCHMANN.

Well! say on, heretics that ye are. I would avoid your company, but that I have hopes of your conversion. Come! where is this wine you spake of?

VON HEYNE (*rising*).

Nay! if you preach upon that text, you are likely to make converts here. Here comes your text-book.

[*Enter AGATHA with wine, which she places upon the table; those seated drink and converse.*]

VON HEYNE.

Ha! my pretty Agatha! What! did you go with Rudolph to the cellar to choose the wine?

AGATHA.

No, indeed, sir, I did not.

VON HEYNE.

What have you done with him, then?

AGATHA.

Sir, Herr Rudolph is talking to a stranger gentleman who has this moment arrived, and is asking for you.

VON HEYNE.

For me! A stranger! What kind of man is he?

AGATHA.

It is a horseman, sir, who has ridden far, and seems weary. Shall I say that you will see him here?

VON HEYNE.

You have some other room not occupied. Let him wait there, and say that I will come.

CURSCHMANN (*rising, and rather drunk*).

Stay! I bar that, Von Heyne. Agatha belongs to me.

MULDER (*rising*).

To me, you mean!

OTTO (*drunk, and staggering towards them*).

Come here, my love, to me.

[*They try to catch her: she escapes from them, and runs out.*
VON HEYNE stands aside, laughing. FRANTZ is seated at a table]

VON HEYNE.

Stay! gentlemen. I am truly sorry to leave such good company; but I am asked for, as it seems, without. I will but leave you for a moment, and return.

MULDER.

No! stay you here, and bring the stranger hither. Our comrades, as it seems, are going hence To taste of a fresh vintage. If you've business, We'll leave you here alone, and look to see you, When you have leisure, at the Black Horse here; You know the place. We'll send the stranger hither.

VON HEYNE (*carelessly*).

Well, let it be so then. Farewell for the present.

FRANTZ.

I will remain, too, by your leave (*to the others*). Good night!

[MULDER and the rest repeat, *Good night!* and exeunt all but
VON HEYNE and FRANTZ.]

VON HEYNE.

We have to thank you for your company
Amongst us here to-night; 'tis somewhat rare.

FRANTZ.

Your friends are well enough to laugh an hour with.
I've looked for you of late: we only meet
In this, or other company elsewhere.

VON HEYNE.

'Tis true, it has been so since that same evening
We spake together on the Kaiserstuhl,
Some three months since, as I believe, or more.

FRANTZ.

You have to meet a stranger here; perhaps
You'd rather speak to him alone?

VON HEYNE.

Remain.

This visit scarcely can be of a nature
To need your leaving us. Why, who is this?

[FRANTZ retires back, and seats himself. Enter WEISSENFELS;
he bows low as VON HEYNE approaches him.]

VON HEYNE.

You have some business with me, as I think.
What is it? Say!

WEISSENFELS.

You do not know me then?

VON HEYNE.

Why, my good friend, I pray you pardon me,

But though I seem to know your features well,
And though we certainly have met before,
I cannot now recall the when and where ;
And I must ask your kindness to assist
My memory.

WEISSENFELS.

My name is Weissenfels ;
And when I saw you last, you were a guest
Of my most noble master's.

VON HEYNE.

Pardon me ;
I know you well. How does Count Frederick ?

WEISSENFELS.

That is, indeed, the worst part of my news.
The Count, my generous patron, and your friend,
Is dead ! And though, indeed, his years were full,
And the infirmities of age had bowed him,
Yet he was such, in truth, that I am sure
We might have better spared most younger men.

VON HEYNE.

Why, my good friend, I much regret him then ;
For such as he seem all too young to die ;
And though I knew him for so brief a time,
And though to some he seemed austere and cold,
I knew full well his noble qualities.
Believe me, that I much do mourn for him.

WEISSENFELS.

Why then you are the worthier of your fortune.
The chief end of my coming was to say,
That by his lawful will and testament,
With all true witnesses and proper forms,
You are proclaimed the heir to his estate.

VON HEYNE (*laughing incredulously*).

Why what strange tale is this, my good old friend?
 Why, Weissenfels! can I have heard you right?
 Once more, what is this that you say to me?

WEISSENFELS.

You are his heir; his lands, his houses, wealth
 Of ev'ry kind, on your disposal wait.
 Except that minor portion that the law
 Reserves to other heirs, entailed to them.
 By what strange fortune this bequest was ruled
 Can now avail you little to inquire,
 But so it is, and in mine own respect
 I had not thought to serve another master.
 Nor do I, in the fulness of mine age,
 Now need the profit of my late employ.
 But thus it was the Count my master's wish,
 And thus he bade me make it known to you,
 That of his true and ancient servitors,
 As many in your service might be stayed
 As you should deem worthy their former posts;
 And if you now do wish me to retain
 The trust I lately filled, I stand but here
 To know your will in matters such as these,
 And in all other things you may command.
 And if it please you, I will then return
 To make all meet for your reception.

VON HEYNE (*aside*).

“At my disposal” good; and “in my service,”
 And “make things meet for my reception!”
 Why this cannot be so: 'tis some deceit,
 And this old steward is set on by some
 To tempt me to discover latent thoughts
 Of an ambition I have oft disclaimed.
 Besides! in what can I have e'er deserved
 The Count's remembrance in a thing like this? (*reflecting*)

WEISSENFELS.

I do but wait here, Sir, to know your will.

VON HEYNE (*turning suddenly*).

You would persuade me, if I do not dream,
That I, but a poor follower, until late,
Of certain liberal arts, am now become
The owner of great wealth. Do you expect
I should receive this as a thing of course—
As though you did but say, the night were cold,
The wind north-east, or that the hour were nine?
Say! are you sure your message is to me;
Or is there not some other of the name
Related to the Count, some one to whom
He owed some greater debt of gratitude?

WEISSENFELS.

Sir, 'tis indeed to you that I am sent,
Although you seem not greatly to rejoice
In your good fortune. If you doubt me still,
I have a letter here, and here another,
From men of good report in Altenberg,
Whose names, perhaps, you know, soliciting
Some benefits that you have power to grant;
Though, but for this, they needed scarce your notice.
I beg, sir, you will read them, and so end
All hesitation in believing me;
If that, indeed, my age and character
Be not sufficient vouchers for my truth.

[WEISSENFELS takes from a kind of wallet two letters, and offers them to VON HEYNE, who opens them and glances for a moment at the contents. He then turns, and approaches the table at which FRANTZ is sitting.]

VON HEYNE.

Look, Frantz, at these; this seems, indeed, like truth.

[To WEISSENFELS, and speaking in a doubtful and hesitating manner.]

If this, indeed, be true that you have told me,

And if I be indeed the heir, as you have said,
 Go back, I pray, and be the steward still
 Where you have served, till now, so worthily.
 To you I delegate authority.
 Let all the former officers remain
 According to your judgment in such matters ;
 On other business now I cannot speak,
 All seems so new and strange. You are fatigued ;
 Remain for this one night here at the inn,
 And travel back to Altenberg to-morrow.
 Within five days, at farthest, I will come ;
 And, until then, use my authority
 In all things that may seem to need a change.

WEISSENFELS.

'Tis good ; I will obey you, sir. Farewell.

[*Exit.*]

VON HEYNE.

You have heard all, my friend.

FRANTZ (*coming forward*).

Ay, I did hear :
 And I have read these letters that you gave me ;
 And, as it chances, I too know this man.
 You may dismiss, I think, all further doubt.

VON HEYNE.

Is not this one of Fortune's strangest freaks?

FRANTZ.

No ! I have heard of stranger. If, indeed,
 You, in this sudden change of things, should hold
 Thoughts and opinions which you formerly
 Professed, why that were stranger far than this.

VON HEYNE.

I am unchanged. Have you observed in me

Any triumphant or immoderate joy
At this new thing which has befallen me?

FRANTZ.

Why, no! there needs none; it were early yet:
That which I look for is more gradual.
But yet, believe me, I am truly glad
(As though it were mine own) of your good fortune.
Henceforth you scarce will need my friendly counsels.

VON HEYNE.

I now shall need them more; but one word further—
I have a boon to ask—your secrecy.
You know that when a friend's estate is changed
Thus suddenly, a kind of jealousy
Is prone to thrust itself into the minds
Of former comrades, if they shall remain——

FRANTZ.

—— I understand; if they shall occupy
Their former state of free-companionship
Which they were wont to hold with you?

VON HEYNE.

'Tis that;
For know, these men have often shown to me
In colours different from what you've seen,
And some of them I've met in many scenes
Unlike to this, where we've stood, side by side,
At times, when some have done me brother's service.
I would not have them think all this hath ceased,
And that our paths must now lie separate;
Or even look upon me doubtingly,
Or think of me in any other way
Than they were wont to do. That this may be,
Say nothing of what you have heard to-night,
And I, with my concealed, new-gotten power,

Will come amongst them as my former self,
And in this new kind of disguise may work
Some good unseen. What think you?

FRANTZ.

Why, 'tis well:

Rely on me; but there is much to say.
Come, let us leave this place and talk elsewhere.
I see for you at last a destiny
Such as, indeed, I've often wished for you;
But, if we linger here, your friends return.

VON HEYNE.

You are my oldest friend, and have best claim
Upon my leisure; let us walk together.

[*Exeunt.*]

END OF ACT THE SECOND.

ACT THE THIRD.

SCENE 1.

An Apartment in the Castle of Altenberg (same as Act the First, Scene 1). Enter two SERVING MEN from different sides, meeting.

FIRST SERVING MAN.

How now ! Canst thou not stay awhile ? Art thou, for once, in haste ?

SECOND SERVING MAN.

To be in haste—'tis a vile habit, of the which I have cured myself indifferently. Your old proverb says, "the more haste the worse speed."

FIRST SERVING MAN.

Then thou wouldst seem to be a speedy messenger ?

SECOND SERVING MAN.

'Tis true, indeed ; as thou see'st, I hasten not.

FIRST SERVING MAN.

When thou drinkest with thy friend, dost thou not hasten to empty the flagon ?

SECOND SERVING MAN.

But I do, indeed. Thou knowest, to hasten is not to speed. Now, I would not speed in drink.

FIRST SERVING MAN.

Away ! thou art an equivocator.

SECOND SERVING MAN.

And thou art a true man.

FIRST SERVING MAN.

Content !

SECOND SERVING MAN.

Therefore, the greater rogue.

FIRST SERVING MAN.

How so? not I, indeed.

SECOND SERVING MAN.

Why, is not the nature of man evil? If, therefore, thou art true to thy nature, thou doest evil; but if false, then art thou a false man.

FIRST SERVING MAN.

To whom is thy message? and from whom?

SECOND SERVING MAN.

'Tis from the steward, to the chief cook.

FIRST SERVING MAN.

If thou make no greater haste, thou shalt find him, when thou comest unto him, true to his nature, which is, as thou sayest, evil; for he will turn thee about, and roast thee, and baste thee, and serve thee in divers fashions; and when thou comest again unto the steward, thou shalt fare worse, for he will cast accounts with thee, and enlarge thee, and grant thee a lease.

SECOND SERVING MAN.

Nay; for the cook, I will not discuss with him; he hath not the gift of argument. He is unreasonable in his ragouts, and doth sauce his puddings most illogically. How shall he judge of a difficult matter who cannot discriminate in a stew?

FIRST SERVING MAN.

Canst tell me, is the master, Von Heyne, yet abroad?

SECOND SERVING MAN.

No; he is, I think, in his studio, where he does nothing but gaze upon old pictures, and play upon divers instruments of music, and read idle books in foreign tongues, which being discoursed by certain professors chiefly through the nose are, as they say, more harmonious.

FIRST SERVING MAN.

Well, yonder comes he, together with him who sent thee. I will leave thee.

SECOND SERVING MAN.

Is it Von Heyne himself? I will depart, lest I be found in evil company.

[*Exeunt different ways.*]

Enter VON HEYNE and WEISSENFELS.

VON HEYNE.

The clouds seem heavy, and portend a storm.

WEISSENFELS.

Indeed, sir, the weather is cloudy and unsettled.

VON HEYNE.

I must content me to look upon the landscape from within. Is there any news from the court? or aught of interest from the city?

WEISSENFELS.

There is news from the court. Has it not reached you, sir?

VON HEYNE.

I have heard nothing; what is your news?

WEISSENFELS.

They say that some of the old ministers are stripped of office?

VON HEYNE.

It matters little; are not others appointed in their stead?

WEISSENFELS.

They are, indeed. Will it please you that I recount to you their names?

VON HEYNE.

No; speak of other matters. I care but little for a whole history of such. (*pausing*) See you these woods, Weissenfels? (*turning to a window*) this verdure? yon grey hills? that streamlet?

WEISSENFELS.

Ay, sir; I have looked upon them, morn and even, 'tis now some thirty years.

VON HEYNE.

Well did not these look, even from the first, the same as now we see them?

WEISSENFELS.

The very same; I know no difference.

VON HEYNE.

And the small four-footed inhabitants of the thicket, the prey they sought; or roots, or leaves, or herbage, that they fed on: the birds of the air, the plumage that they wore, the songs they sang; the wild fruits and the minutest insects that gave them sustenance; the perfume of the wild herbs; the seasonable warmth or coldness of the air according to the nature of this our climate; the dried-up brook in the fierce summer heat; the flooded meadows in autumnal rain: all these were what we see them to this day.

WEISSENFELS.

They are not changed, sir.

VON HEYNE.

That they are not, since the old Roman came,
Why this it is ; they change their policies,
Yet cannot change the genius of the soil.
I would not be what now-a-days they call
A patriot, for worlds ! I understand not
These crooked questions of state management.
Enough for me to love the land itself,
And the old race that springs from out its bosom.

WEISSENFELS.

Such were, sir, the opinions that were held
By my late lord, the Count. Few understood,
'Twas thought, better than he the interests
Of our beloved land, and yet he took
No part in faction.

VON HEYNE.

So, indeed, I've heard.

WEISSENFELS.

Yet was he careful to make daily question
Of matters he might influence for good,
Touching the interests of those around him.
The bad he punished, lest they should discourage
The good ; and these he strengthened and confirmed,
And would not see them struggle hopelessly
With penury and want ; while misery
Dwelt scarcely in his kin, for none were wretched
But evil men. I have oft heard him say,
The best defenders of our native soil
Were those who had known happiness upon it.

VON HEYNE.

'Twas a most just remark, and worthy him.
How say you, will this threatened storm pass over ?

WEISSENFELS.

I do not think, sir, it will pass away.

VON HEYNE.

And yet I could have wished the day were fair,
For 'twas my purpose then to go a journey,
A distant one; as far as Heidelberg.
There is some business which demands my care.
Besides, I must confess another reason:
I am grown somewhat restless here of late,
Even in this Arcadia of ours,
Though 'twill surprise you perhaps to hear me say it.

WEISSENFELS.

Sir, have you any wish ungratified?

VON HEYNE.

It is not that. I cannot be ungrateful
Unto that Providence which cast my lot
In such a lovely spot as Altenberg.
No! my heart swells with gratitude and pride.
Yet, Weissenfels, our land has other landscapes.
You care to look on nature only here;
'Tis scarcely so with me, and busier scenes
Have still to me some lingering interest.
But I will not detain you longer here
With questions which can entertain you little.
If you have business, you may leave me now.

WEISSENFELS (*bowing*).

I will attend, sir, to those things you spoke of.

VON HEYNE (*solus*).

Yes! it is even so; and I begin
To tire, even of the fulness of my fortune.
More than I could have dreamed of is my own
Of all material things; and for awhile

I found a pleasure in surveying these,
 Like to a child with some new-fancied toy.
 Yet now I can enjoy but little more
 Than what I held at my command before.
 And, for those other dreams of mine, in which
 I fain would play the part of Providence,
 I am forestalled, it seems, in much of this.
 All seems well-balanced and adjusted here.
 True, I, for pastime, might commence a strife
 With neighbour equals, for no better reason
 Than that their ways are different from my own.
 But it is strange that, as to these same men,
 I do not hold them in such high disdain
 As I was wont ; or, rather, think not of them,
 Having long ceased to measure me with such.
 And of those talents which some used to praise,
 I lose some relish in their late disuse ;
 And that imagination, that strong power,
 Which could redeem low fortunes with high hopes,
 Whose happy fancies brought me calm content,
 And smoothed again the furrows care was working,
 Seems dulled of late, ev'n by success ; and I,
 In gaining much, have yet lost something too.
 Enough of thought. Surely, even while I spoke,
 Some stranger crossed the court ; if so, he's welcome,
 Or any one that brings an uncharged heart
 And an unclouded brain.

[*Enter a Servant.*]

SERVANT.

If't please you, sir,
 The messenger has brought you here a letter.

[*Delivers it.*]

VON HEYNE.

See that he be detained, until I know
 If this require an immediate answer.

[*Exit Servant.* VON HEYNE looks at the letter for a moment,
 without breaking the seal.]

VON HEYNE.

Why, what is this? From Frantz? I saw him here
'Tis scarce a fortnight since; what can have passed
Within that time that I can need to know of?

[*He opens and reads the letter.*]

“On the receipt of this, you would do well to repair immediately to Heidelberg. Some of your former associates have unwisely ventured themselves in giving offence to men of some power and authority here, and need whatever influence you have, combined with mine, to bring them safely off. And not this only, but matters of state appear to promise certain changes in which, were you present, I see opportunities for your own advancement in public honours; the which I entreat you no longer to neglect, as you truly value the good opinion of

“Your friend,

“FRANTZ REICHARDT.”

Oh! my ambition long since sank to sleep,
When first these walls received me as their master;
But, for the rest, there lies a plain appeal,
Which I must answer. Heav'n knows, I need
No other spur than my own inclination
To fly once more to my old city life.
The sky seems somewhat clearer than it was;
It shall be so. Ho! Fritz! Karl! some of you

[*Enter a Servant.*]

See that the horses be got ready, and
Prepare yourself to ride with me at once
To Heidelberg, and tell them to place quickly
Refreshment and some wine. Away! dispatch!

[*Exit Servant.*]

The storm which threatened us an hour since
Has passed away; and my impatience

To be from here, where nothing asks my stay,
 Shall have the rein, and I will part from this
 Within the hour to visit former scenes.
 For though I am not mindless of the hand
 Which sends me all so many crave to have ;
 And though, with constant effort, I have striven
 To show myself as worthy of the trust
 As my imperfect nature might admit ;
 Yet in the word at least, though not in sense,
 The proverb of its force must lose some part :
 This way my treasure lies—but not my heart.

[*Exit.*]

SCENE 2.

Heidelberg—An Apartment in the house of Von Riesenstein.

Enter MADAME BLUMENTHAL and FRANTZ.

MADAME BLUMENTHAL.

You ask me of my brother ; and of late,
 To say the truth, there seems to be a change
 Of outward manner in Von Riesenstein.
 Whether he feel some sign of coming age
 And its infirmities within himself,
 Or that some public business weighs upon him,
 Or what may be the cause, I do not know ;
 But it is certain that he is become
 More grave and stern, more silent and reserved ;
 Sometimes almost imperious and harsh ;
 Carries a careworn look, and sits apart.
 Yet he will brook no questioning ; whate'er
 His cares may be, he keeps them all his own.
 And though I have essayed at different times
 To draw from him some explanation forth,
 Yet it is vain.

FRANTZ.

But, madam, is it you
Alone who have observed this conduct in him?
Or has it drawn upon him the comment
Of those about him?

MADAME BLUMENTHAL.

Happily, as yet
I think that no strange eyes have noted this;
Nor have they had occasion, for he shuns
Much company. I speak of this to you
Because you have much of his confidence,
And are, besides, somewhat related to us;
And, therefore, may essay with better grace,
When the occasion best shall offer, to
Seek from him what it is that troubles him.
The cause may be but slight, but until found,
We know not how to bring a remedy.

FRANTZ.

What pow'r I have, I'll try; but you are wrong
To ponder this. Perhaps Von Riesenstein
Suffers some trifling malady; or maybe
'Tis some of these political affairs
In which he needlessly concerns himself—
That is, far more than his mere duty asks;
Or, it may be, the late inclement skies
Have damped his spirits; nothing worse, believe me.
I am acquainted with the chiefer points
Relating to his fortunes, as I think.
No fear of worldly ill can weigh upon him;
Nor see I cause of any other kind.
Enough of this! What other news? but stay,
Here comes Helene (*enter HELENE*). Fair cousin, of all those
Who lay so oft their service at your feet,
Believe me the most humble.

HELENE.

No one doubts
Humility like yours. But, cousin Frantz,
You are become a stranger to us here ;
My father lately has much spoken of you.

FRANTZ.

We were conversing of him as you entered.
I have been occupied with many things,
And have, besides been, absent from the city
For many days of late. I have some friends
With whom I've passed such time as I could spare.

HELENE.

You used to be our frequent messenger,
And bring us note of every novelty ;
And have you nothing now to tell us of ?

FRANTZ.

Little that well might serve to entertain you.
For instance, I might say some foreign states,
Late enemies, have grown presumptuous,
Because we gave them peace a year too soon,
As every one foresaw. And then, for us,
Some of our greatest and most noble men
Have lately made their end, and other some
Risen to greatness and nobility
To fill their place. Some of our ministers
Have quitted office ; and of news like this
I've made a great collection : but I think
You'll neither care to hear of such as this,
Not being studious in politics.

HELENE.

But, for those friends whom you have lately seen,
We scarce shall credit your excuse, unless
You tell us more. Come ! let us hear their names,

That we may know what choice companionship
Kept you elsewhere.

FRANTZ.

Fair ladies, so you shall,
If it will entertain you, though perhaps
The names are only slightly known to you,
If known at all. Well, then, I will begin.
Von Heyne, Oberthal—do you remember
Either?

HELENE.

Have we not seen Von Heyne here?
Is he not of this city?

FRANTZ.

Formerly

He was.

MADAME BLUMENTHAL.

Have we not seen him several times
In your own company?

FRANTZ.

'Tis very likely,
For I have known him almost from his childhood.

MADAME BLUMENTHAL.

Is not this man one of the many who,
Under a specious show of these pursuits
Of liberal professions, science, arts
Which might bring honour and advancement on them,
Do league themselves into a brotherhood,
Whose nightly revels, folly, and rude mirth,
Seem the great end to which alone they bring
Whatever gifts or opportunities
Or means that they possess, so that at last
Our city has become as famed for such
As for aught else?

FRANTZ.

Indeed, he may have been.
You have described a class : I cannot tell
How far he may be tinctured with their follies.
You know I am no advocate for such,
Although, as I have said, I am his friend,
From having known him in his boyish days.

HELENE.

I would advise such friends, or leave them quickly.
I think my father sits within his study,
If you will seek him there.

FRANTZ.

Will you not rather see him, and make known
My presence here? I would not thrust myself
Upon Von Riesenstein if, as you say, (*to MADAME B.*)
He sees few visitors.

[*Enter a Servant.*]

SERVANT.

Ladies, so please you,
My master sends me here to let you know
That he would speak with you.

HELENE.

Say we will come.

[*Exit Servant.*]

FRANTZ.

Adieu for the present. If he ask for me,
Your messenger will find me hereabouts.

MADAME BLUMENTHAL.

We either shall return, or send for you ;
Till then, we beg your stay.

[*Exeunt MADAME B. and HELENE.*]

FRANTZ (*solus*).

My cousin's fair,
A trifle proud, may be ; yet sees, I think,

Sometimes with her own eyes instead of others'.
 That's like myself; although I dare not say so—
 Not in this house, at least. I pray the gods,
 Von Riesenstein may summon me forthwith,
 Though I am still too young for a confessor
 Unto so grave a penitent. To gain
 A reputation for a grain of wisdom,
 Brings thus its cares. Perhaps some few would think
 That I had coldly urged my friend's defence,
 Because I suffered thus his name to lie
 Under the imputation of some faults
 Which are but partly his; but had I preached
 Upon the other theme, and praised his virtues,
 My speech, perhaps, had scarce found listeners.
 Now, in good time, here comes my messenger.

[*Re-enter Servant.*]

SERVANT.

My master bade me tell you, sir, he waits
 To speak with you alone.

FRANTZ.

Well! well! lead on,
 And let us wait upon him.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE 3.

A Street before the House of VON RIESENSTEIN. Enter VON HEYNE and MÜLDER, meeting.

MÜLDER.

Well met, Von Heyne. You grow a stranger to us in Heidelberg.

VON HEYNE.

Not willingly, believe me. Some business has lately called me hence, which also compelled me, now some five months since, to part from my good friends here more hurriedly than is my custom.

MÜLDER.

So much we heard. Come you now once more to live in Heidelberg?

VON HEYNE.

Not altogether so, at this present time; and yet I have some few days' leisure, which upon occasion may extend itself.

MÜLDER.

Truly I am glad to hear it. I am even now on my way to meet some of our friends, who wait for me close by. If you be not turned hermit, which I am loth to think, you will join company with them and me; unless, indeed, you have other business.

VON HEYNE.

'Tis as you say, Mülder. I have to-night some other matters which prevent me; and am indeed now seeking one to whom you, perhaps, may guide me.

MÜLDER.

You speak, perhaps, of Reichardt, with whom I met scarce half an hour since.

VON HEYNE.

Where may I find him now?

MÜLDER.

See you yonder house with the high portal?

VON HEYNE.

Von Riesenstein's?

MÜLDER.

Yes; are you not of his acquaintance?

VON HEYNE.

I partly knew him, very slightly—some time since.

MÜLDER.

Well, thither was he bound; and there, I do not doubt, you may find him now. I am myself now going to the Black Horse, where, should you find opportunity, I shall be glad to see you.

VON HEYNE.

Well, if I am not prevented; and, till then, farewell.

MÜLDER.

Fare you well.

[*Exit.*]

VON HEYNE. (*Solus.*)

I have sought him these two hours, and could nowhere find him. And now he is here; and how to have speech with him, I know not. Had I best linger here until he come? Then, if he have already gone hence, I merely lose the time; or, being well entertained, he will not yet take leave; or again, waiting here, I fall amongst others of my former comrades, who, hearing no denial, carry me perforce to the nearest tavern; and, truly, that were as wise as lingering here. Surely, I shall light upon some one of the household, of whom I can make inquiry. 'Tis true, I am scarce known to any; what then? The night grows chilly, and waiting here is tedious; I will enter.

[*Exit into house; scene closes.*]

SCENE 4.

Another Apartment in the House of VON RIESENSTEIN. VON HEYNE enters slowly, looking round him carefully in different directions.

VON HEYNE.

This is most strange, that I should come so far
And meet with none to question me, nor one

Whom I might question. If this should so chance
That any find me here, it is most like
They take me for no honest character ;
And so, 'twill lie with me to prove the fact,
Which well might need some skilful argument.
But now, to end debate, some one approaches,
And I must choose my plan ; yet let me see,
By Heav'n ! it is Von Riesenstein himself,
And, as I live, the other is my friend
Whom I did seek, but will not find him now
In such good company. The corridor
Is long and gives me some few moments' time
To screen myself from observation.
Heav'n grant they tell no secrets while they stay ;
I would not willingly play eaves-dropper.

[*Conceals himself.*]

Enter VON RIESENSTEIN and FRANTZ.

VON RIESENSTEIN.

At last we are alone. You wonder now
What things of serious import I would speak of ?
The doors are shut, is it not so ? Till now
I have seldom needed other counsellors
Than Heav'n, and mine own bosom ; but, of late,
I have been pondering some secret griefs
Which burden me. I know that it is weak
To speak of private griefs in stranger ears.
I am no longer young ; and coming age,
I think, grows garrulous in me already.

FRANTZ.

What can this be which seems thus to oppress you ?
If you should need the office of a friend
In anything in my ability,
You know I am a kind of kinsman to you,
And do but wait to know how I may serve you.
Sure nothing in your temporal affairs

Can be the cause! and in all other things,
 I see around you nothing to disturb
 The calmness of your former character.
 What is this thing?

VON RIESENSTEIN.

True, true you have not heard;
 'Tis known to me alone. Come nearer now;
 Say, have you never known ambition,
 The secret wish to make yourself a name
 In pow'r, or rank: or wealth, and men's esteem?
 And looking, p'rhaps, still further through the dark,
 Uncertain veil of time, have you e'er hoped
 Those dear to you might know a kinder lot,
 Might tread o'er flowers to our common end
 Where you had smoothed the way?

FRANTZ.

I cannot tell.

I know that it is good to stand alone,
 Ask aid from none, and never need a friend,
 Lest that the hand from which we seek a boon
 Should deal a buffet.

VON RIESENSTEIN.

True, most true; it may,
 He who does this, stands like a tower in strength,
 Which asks no sunshine and which fears no storm.
 Well, then, this thought, that I have spoken of,
 Was mine—was mine. We were a noble house,
 My ancestors—in times gone by, although
 I am not the direct inheritor
 Of their high honours. I had heard and read
 Of what had been before; until at last
 I dreamt that this perchance might be again;
 And then I wrought in secret to this end,
 And took some office in the state affairs.

This last you know ; and still I was at ease,
For my anxieties at first were met
By many things of happy augury.

FRANTZ.

Why so I knew ; and is it not so now ?

VON RIESENSTEIN.

No, no ! the time is past : but listen now.
'Tis but a few months—nay, a few days since,
Part of my hopes remained. Within that time
I have cast them all aside ; but first of all,
This my high charge, which I have held with pride,
The post which I have filled most faithfully,
Is taken from me.

FRANTZ.

Is it so, indeed ?

What, think you, is the cause ?

VON RIESENSTEIN.

None is assigned.

There is a man but newly raised to power,
Whom I did once offend unwittingly ;
And there, perhaps, may lie the mystery.
But this ill fortune comes not all alone ;
There was another whom I thought my friend,
With whom, at need, my means were always shared ;
But enmity is steadier far than friendship,
And he who trusts or friend or enemy
(As it would seem) meets, either way, his fate.
For this one hath impoverished my means,
And undermined the rock on which he leant ;
This were enough, yet more remains behind.

FRANTZ.

These things are new to me, and yet I thought

That I had been as much your confidant
As any other.

VON RIESENSTEIN.

You had nought to ask ;
And those who had, found ready access to me,
And used it well. I thought, in acting thus,
To build myself some popularity ;
And if the time had served in other things,
I had already gained my purposed end. (*Pausing.*)
In former years I was well known to one
Of ancient name and old nobility,
And of estate to match ; and in his veins
There ran the blood of this same noble line,
From which I claim a less direct descent.
And though his name and title cease with him,
Yet as in youth the pride of ancestry
And cherished love of race, had been his theme—
As many knew—'twas thought he would bequeath
All that depended on his own free will
To one at least by some slight tie allied
To the old name. But now, as it would seem,
Either his heart has been estranged from us,
Or he had lost the ancient pride of race,
Or else, as I much doubt, was practised on
By those around him ; so when, by mere chance,
There reached me the report that he was dead
(For latterly he had lived much retired),
I found that his estate had passed away
Unto a nameless wanderer ; who, by
What means I know not, hath become possessed
Of that which should have been my heritage.

FRANTZ.

Indeed ! (*aside*) This tale, at least, seems not so new.

VON RIESENSTEIN.

What were his claims, in truth I do not know,

Unto such high preferment. They do say
 That he bears his unlooked-for fortune well,
 Like one most moderate in prosperity.
 What then! this only shows a kind of wisdom
 That is, perhaps, allied to much of craft;
 But were each virtue 'neath the sun his own,
 Is not this act most unaccountable?
 I am not given to curses, or to wrath;
 But yet I feel by fortune much oppressed,
 And have some cause for anger.

FRANTZ.

Say no more
 Of what is past, nothing can be recalled,
 But let us rather speak of what remains?
 I am your friend, and, in some sense, your debtor;
 Your fortunes have been wrecked by several means.
 Well (*approaching and laying his finger upon the arm of* VON
 RIESENSTEIN) let us strive to build them up again.

VON RIESENSTEIN.

No! it has ever been my wont till now
 To deal such benefits to other men,
 But to receive none. What remains to me
 Is still sufficient to the private life
 Which best befits broken ambition;
 And I have done my theme: slight means suffice
 To one who has no aim or purpose left.
 Now I have told you all my inmost thoughts;
 I thank you for your patient hearing and
 Your proffered aid, although I need it not.
 Much of what you have heard will soon be known
 To all, but keep my counsel for awhile.
 Now let us break up this our conference
 And go our several ways; to fortune you,
 Life, health, bold confidence, and manhood's prime:
 I to adversity and life's decline;

And p'rhaps some lurking memory of past hopes
That cannot profit me, and will not leave me,
Like some dull fiend we cannot exorcise.
Farewell ! farewell ! and speak of this to none.

FRANTZ.

Stay yet a moment ! all is not yet lost,
The judgment fails when men are thus cast down.
Take time to think how I may serve you best.

VON RIESENSTEIN.

I tell you, no ! to rouse again such thoughts
You do the office of an enemy.
Now let us go.

FRANTZ.

Well ! be it as you please.

[*Exeunt VON RIESENSTEIN and FRANTZ.*]

VON HEYNE (*coming forward*).

By Heaven ! I never knew of this ; nor dreamed
The Count and this Von Riesenstein related.
What said he ? “ wise but crafty too ! ” enough !
He will not be alone in such a judgment.
My new-found honours shrink from me, and all
The gems I’ve lately worn are grown too heavy.
Fate sent me here to listen to this story.
At once all shall be rendered clear as day ;
And if imputed wrong remain with me,
I’ll find some quick and sudden remedy.

[*Exit slowly.*]

END OF ACT THE THIRD.

ACT THE FOURTH.

SCENE 1.

Cross roads, with view of the Castle of Altenberg in the background. Enter WILHELM and GOTTLIEB.

WILHELM.

So, Gottlieb, you too are dismissed, it seems,
From our late master's service.

GOTTLIEB.

So are all,
Or most of us: why, every minute now
Some one is taking leave; have you not heard?

WILHELM.

I have heard nothing yet that should explain
All this we see to-day. I may have guessed
Something from strangers passing to and fro,
Coming and going, now these five days past;
And we have noticed that our patron's mood
Is grown somewhat more angry and impatient
Since he returned, last time, from Heidelberg,
Than it had used to be with us at first.
But what means this?

GOTTLIEB.

This is what I was told.
We do not quit alone, for he himself
Will take his leave of Altenberg to-day.
'Tis said that the estate has passed away
Unto another, and that the new owner

Has ordered thus : that all who served the Count,
Your former master, or have held employment
With this our late one, be dismissed at once.
Some of his people are this moment come,
And entered on possession of the place,
As though they were born there, and we but strangers.

WILHELM.

This change is somewhat sudden ; then 'twould seem
This was too quiet an abode for one
Long used to revel in a city life,
And Altenberg has found a purchaser ?

GOTTLIEB.

Why I have heard it said, the cause lies deeper !
And that Von Heyne—how, I cannot tell—
Has met with sudden loss. 'Tis very likely ;
You know the strange, wild life that many lead
In Heidelberg, who stake most heavy sums
Upon a single throw : cards, dice, a bet,
Some formal debts, or late extravagance,
Or all these things together, may have done this.

WILHELM.

Why this, indeed, surprises me still more
Than my first thought ; for we have never seen
The signs of wild extravagance in him,
Like this you speak of ; but howe'er that be,
You say that he leaves Altenberg to-day ?

GOTTLIEB.

Why yes ; he was preparing to depart
As I passed through the hall, and has sent on,
As far as to the outskirts of the village,
Some huntsman's preparations that he means
To bear upon the road ; for, as I hear,
He parts from here on foot and unattended.

WILHELM.

Indeed ! where is the stranger gentleman
Who came but yesterday from Heidelberg ?

GOTTLIEB.

They were together as I came away,
And seemed to be engaged in close dispute
Upon some serious matter.

WILHELM.

So he goes
From here alone ? Well ! I, for one, confess
As great a willingness to follow him,
In his uncertainty of present fortunes,
As I have ever known until this time
To take a part in his prosperity.

GOTTLIEB.

So do not I, indeed. If he have fallen
From such high fortune through mere heedlessness,
It were in me, I think, small proof of wit,
At such a time, to seek advancement with him.

WILHELM.

You are but lately come among us here,
And know but little of the man you speak of.
I cannot doubt we shall find other reasons.

GOTTLIEB.

Well ! each to his own way of thinking ; so,
Which is your way ?

WILHELM.

I will rest hereabout.

GOTTLIEB.

And I will to the village : so, God speed you.

[Exit.]

Enter VON HEYNE *and* FRANTZ.

VON HEYNE.

Here then the road divides ; there lies your path,
And this way mine. You know the history
Of all that has occurred these ten months past.
I must arouse all my best energies,
Though late, to face what lies before me now.
Enough that I've discharged what seemed a duty ;
And freely laid down all that had been claimed
By others with a specious show of right,
Which threw reproach on me. And now, I go
To see if Providence have yet in store
Contentment for a man free from ambition ;
Which, having found, I calmly may enjoy
Free from injurious envy or suspicion.

FRANTZ.

What man who wins success of any kind
Can live secure from these ? You, I, or any ?
What mattered, even if Von Riesenstein,
Angry at failing fortunes, should throw out
Unfounded accusation and surmise
As to your valid title ? What had he
On which to found a right, except, perhaps,
A mouldy sheet of parchment, written when
The Count and he were friends, some score of years
Ago, or more ? This you yourself produced.
And mark me now : he never will repay
You with the barest show of gratitude ;
For this would seem to recognize a debt,
And he professes none. Nay, more than this :
The man himself at heart does not believe
What he assumes to think ; and will the more
Take any means to force belief on others
That you have sought, by fraud, to injure him.

VON HEYNE.

You know, in this, I have forestalled him partly.
My legal right was proved in face of day,
After a close dispute. I thank some friends
Who came around, and took me by the hand,
And said, whate'er the future might bring forth,
Their faith was still unshaken in my honour.

FRANTZ.

Well ! I was one ; enough, forget it now.
And for the rest, I fear it is too late,
And that you cannot now recall the act
By which, in a mistaken sense of duty,
You have abandoned what was yours of right,
Only because some few professed to doubt it.

VON HEYNE.

Think you that I could be indifferent
Unto the scoffs, and gibes, and whisperings,
Of every shallow and malignant fool?
I am not callous ; 'tis my very nature
To bend to every breath of praise or censure,
To feel a pride in every word of honour,
And suffer keenly from disparagement.
And even now, by Heaven ! I could not bear
To profit by what some have deemed a proof
Of failing reason in my benefactor.
I do revere his memory, and know
The principles, the motives, upon which
His seeming strange bequest to me was founded,
Which I have heard at leisure many times
From one who was a witness in my cause,
One whom you know ; an old, grey-headed man.

FRANTZ.

'Twas he who brought you first intelligence
Of your new fortunes, as I think—the steward?

VON HEYNE.

Yes, yes! the same; they say that he conspired
To bring to light fictitious documents,
To render me, by these, the seeming heir;
And then, in secret, to receive a part.
This Weissenfels is temperate and thrifty;
And from the profits of his post, it seems,
Has found the means to save a moderate store.
This lately known, they give out the report
That this is but a part of his reward,
The first instalment of his share of plunder
Received from me.

FRANTZ.

If I had earlier known

Of all you tell me now, I would have used
All my best efforts to dissuade you from
This act: but, long ere this, Von Riesenstein
Holds firm possession of the documents
By which you constitute your right his own.
So 'tis too late to change our purposes;
Nor is he likely now to loose his hold
On what he claimed so readily at first.
He has a kind of ostentation,
Which would seem generous rather than just.
I've seen him liberal where he owed nothing,
And turn his back on one who claimed his due.
And now you purpose, as you say, to quit
This land awhile?

VON HEYNE.

Why, yes; I do intend so.

I fain would change the scene awhile where all
Seems changed to me.

FRANTZ.

Remain in Heidelberg,

And follow my first counsel.

VON HEYNE.

If I could
Be there as I have been before, 'twere well.
This cannot be so now.

FRANTZ.

'Tis true, that times
Are somewhat changed, and your intent is good,
If that it be to win yourself a name
On newer ground. But you are unprovided !
You have abandoned all.

VON HEYNE.

I still possess
Some poor remains of my old former means,
Enough to answer my necessities
Till I can win myself, by head or hand—
I care not how—some poor sufficiency.
But all that I found here, I leave untouched
To him who claims it, and has slandered me
Each hour since that night you spoke together,
And I was an unwilling listener.
I cannot shed the blood of the old dotard,
And should but add by any violent act
The name of ruffian unto the rest—
Of fraudulent imposter, hypocrite,
And low adventurer, that I'm branded with.
But you know all, I doubt not, and have spared
Me the recital, which has reached me still
In other ways.

FRANTZ.

And which road take you now ?
And whither go you ? and what purpose you ?

VON HEYNE.

This road which lies before us I shall follow
And journey towards Vienna.

FRANTZ.

And when there,
What course do you pursue?

VON HEYNE.

Why, any one
That Fortune may point out, that does not ask
That I should study every look and word,
And plan, contrive, and plot, how best to win
Small mean advantages from petty men.
If this be needful to invite success,
I do not ask t'enjoy those gifts of fortune
Which I've no will to win. I'd rather be
A peasant lab'ring for a daily crust,
Or stand amid the common ranks of war,
Or live a simple vinedresser or herdsman,
Than sink to this; to keep guard o'er my tongue,
And teach my feet a narrow mincing gait,
From fear to give offence to fools about me,
Who tolerate no manners but their own.

FRANTZ.

Why, here's a goodly choice of occupation
Which you've selected! would you dig the earth,
Or tender flocks, or lead a woodman's life?
You might indeed content you for awhile
With peasant's simple fare, and daily labour;
Scarce with the peasant's company. I know
You better than yourself, who think, perhaps,
You can control the elements of fate,
Because you are a cosmopolitan,
To whom most foreign tongues are grown familiar,
One who has read not books alone, but men,
Has seen some travel, and to whom appear
All skies the same; and strangers, brethren.
But yet, remember, that the highest gifts
Do serve a man in nothing if he fail

To use them to some fixed and settled purpose ;

[*Speaking slowly and thoughtfully.*]

And thus youth passes, and time brings regret,
And you will find——

VON HEYNE.

Your speech forbodes me ill.
Come ! let us talk no more on such a theme.
This world was made for men, and I am one ;
And while my lot is like my fellow man's,
I am content. What should you fear for me ?
I go into the general world to strive
With fate, if it be ill ; to seize upon
Each passing fair occasion like the rest,
And, like all other men, to claim my share
Of Providence. Farewell ! here lies my way.

FRANTZ.

Why then, farewell ! if that it must be so.

VON HEYNE.

I thank you for your friendship until now,
And do intend that we shall meet again ;
Till then, take my good wishes.

FRANTZ.

And you mine.

[*Exit.*]

[*As VON HEYNE is going out, he meets WILHELM, who, during the latter part of the preceding dialogue, has been observed lingering in the background ; both advance to the front.*]

VON HEYNE.

Well ! Wilhelm, you would speak to me, I think ?
What is it you would say ?

WILHELM.

I have a sort of favour, sir, to ask.

VON HEYNE.

What favours I have now the power to grant,
I fear, are poor ones. But what is it, Wilhelm,
That you would ask of me?

WILHELM.

Sir, I have heard
That you leave Altenberg.

VON HEYNE.

Yes; it is true.
You have been doubtless told, or should have been,
That these possessions are no longer mine.
But time is passing, and I am in haste;
So let me hear at once what you would have.

WILHELM.

I thought you might, perhaps, need one to serve you
Upon your road, and so made bold to ask.

VON HEYNE.

A strange request! I need no followers.

WILHELM.

Not one? You were not used much, as I thought,
To serve yourself of late. You'll pardon me;
I overheard you say, some minutes since,
Unto the gentleman you parted from,
Your journey would be long; and, as I think,
You part from here on foot; you will need one
To bear your wallet bag and birding piece.
I've served you lately, honestly, I think?

VON HEYNE.

Yes; I have found you honest; but I said
I had no longer need of followers.

WILHELM.

Perhaps you fear to find me burdensome :
Let not that thought prevent you. You'll forgive me,
If I speak somewhat freely. I have seen
You have a hand that's far too free and open ;
Strangers will ask, for every petty service,
High recompense ; I will perform all such,
And rest content with but a scant reward ;
And think, you do me favour.

VON HEYNE.

But what means this ?

What is your motive, that you wish to serve
Where there can be but little hope of gain ?
This is your native place ; here you have friends ;
But I return no more. Consider, then,
If you have any motive of that force
To lead you on a long and doubtful journey,
With both the end and the reward unsure !

WILHELM.

'Tis true, sir, I was born in Altenberg,
And, should I die, they'll find me room enough ;
But that I'll find elsewhere. And I have friends,
Who care for me, as one hound for another.
There's nought to stay me. If you need me not,
It is enough. And yet I would have wished
To serve you still, as I have done till now.

VON HEYNE.

Well ! be it so. Should Fortune favour me,
Your gain shall be the greater ; but, remember,
My hopes may be defeated or deferred,
And my fate cast beneath an evil star.
So, if the time shall come that you repent
The choice you make to day, stand not in doubt ;
All paths are free to you as to myself.

And when, some day, at dawn, I take my way
Through field, through forest, or the crowded city,
And find me unattended and alone,
I shall not think the worse of you, poor fellow,
To know you have been like most other men,
And learnt to leave, in time, a falling house ;
Till then, you follow me.

[*Exit, followed by WILHELM.*]

SCENE 2.

*Heidelberg—Apartment in the house of VON RIESENSTEIN
(same as Act the Third, Scene 2). Enter HELENE and
THERESA.*

HELENE.

But why has Frantz left you so suddenly,
And whither is he gone ?

THERESA.

I do not know.

I only know that some intelligence,
And from a distant friend, was brought to him,
That he seemed angry when he read the letter,
And merely said, he must set out in haste
To hinder mischief that might else ensue.

HELENE.

So many things, both strange and unforeseen,
Have lately come to pass, that little need
Surprise us now. It was but yesterday
My father, too, received some sudden news
Of great good fortune, as I think, although
As yet I know not what. He has retired
Into his cabinet and sent for one

Who often has advised him in the law ;
Perhaps 'tis some bequest from relatives,
Or hope of some retrieval of his losses.
But when will Frantz return ?

THERESA.

He said, to-day.

HELENE.

I hope it may be so indeed, for he
Alone, of all my father's many friends,
Is a disinterested counsellor ;
And his advice may be much needed now,
Where that of strangers would be little worth.

[*Enter VON RIESENSTEIN.*]

VON RIESENSTEIN.

What here, Helene? I have been seeking you.
I have intelligence of some importance,
Which you may know of, now it has received
The confirmation that it seemed to need.

THERESA.

I will retire then, sir, for awhile.

VON RIESENSTEIN.

No, stay you here ; there is no need to leave us.
You both know much already of this business
With which I have been occupied but lately,
In seeking to establish my just claims
To the estate of a deceased dear friend.
The cause was judged and my claim disallowed,
This you have heard ; but notwithstanding this,
I harboured still the doubts I had before,
And moved a second trial, purposing
To offer some new evidence in proof
That my deceased lamented relative

Had given evidence of failing reason,
Of infirm mind—you understand me—for
A year or more before the date of this
Last will and testament which has been proved.

HELENE.

I thought, sir, that you were at last convinced,
And had resolved to make no further claim?

VON RIESENSTEIN.

What! think you that I could believe this strange
And most unlikely story? that a man,
Just, circumspect, and wise, as he had been,
Should, in a sudden and unjust caprice,
Bequeath his wealth to an adventurer,
A man without a station or a name—
A man, it may be, of a specious tongue,
And of a seeming free and careless nature,
Which only waited, as it seems, occasion
To show the workings of a subtle mind?
I judged him differently from the rest;
And though at first I yielded to the time,
I afterwards resolved to urge my claim,
And secretly have sought out evidence
To prove the Count unduly influenced
By those about him; for there was another,
An aged miscreant, who was his steward;
And, looking to his master's interests,
Watched narrowly his own. What could the Count,
A weak old man, against this plotting pair?
But lately, as it seems, this new-found heir
Begins to entertain well-founded doubts
If that another trial, one more strict,
More searching than the last, would justify
His claim so well; and so, his messenger
Brought me but yesterday from Altenberg
A packet closely sealed, which held a letter
And other documents in legal form.

These last contain a full abandonment
And transfer of his title to myself;
And these my advocate has well examined,
And found the deed in every form complete.

HELENE.

What ! is it possible ? Then can it be
That your suspicions are at length confirmed ?
Indeed at first I thought them scarcely just,
And your opinion hasty.

VON RIESENSTEIN.

Trust me, no !

HELENE.

There was a letter, too ; did you not say so ?

VON RIESENSTEIN.

Yes ! yes ! a cunning and well-worded letter,
In which he tells me that he cannot brook
To bear the taint of envious misconstruction ;
Reproaches me with seeking to attach
To one he calls his noble benefactor,
The charge of weak and infirm intellect ;
Accuses me of grasping avarice ;
And, in conclusion, generously bids
Me take what he, forsooth, needs less than I.
And in good time ; for by his quick decision
He has escaped the after-consequence
Of a reverse of judgment ; this it was,
'Tis clear, which urged him to this sudden step ;
Where else could be the motive ?

HELENE.

Oh ! 'tis hard
To say with certainty where lies the truth.

VON RIESENSTEIN.

What! do you doubt it? why 'tis clear as day.

[*Enter FRANTZ at back.*]

This man is but a conscience-stricken robber,
Who sends the plunder he unjustly got,
Repentant late, to me, the rightful owner :
What should it be?

FRANTZ (*coming forward*).

You are wrong, Von Riesenstein.

VON RIESENSTEIN.

Ah! Reichardt, is it you? You are welcome here.
But what is this you say? that I am wrong?

FRANTZ.

You are, indeed, unjust; I must repeat it,
That am, myself, so much a witness to it.

VON RIESENSTEIN.

You come in haste, it seems, as from a journey;
Does it relate, in aught, to this affair?

FRANTZ.

But yesterday I was in Altenberg,
And parted from this man you have accused:
He was my friend,

VON RIESENSTEIN.

Ah! it is new to me;
I had not thought your friendships of that nature,
Though I have heard your name mentioned with his,
But let us hear; you may have been deceived,
Imposed upon, like others, though I deemed
That you, of all men, owned a better judgment.

FRANTZ.

His father was my friend in early youth,
Whose memory I hold in reverence
For benefits he then conferred on me,
Ere I began to mount the upward road
Which led me to the fortunes that I own.
What gratitude I owe him, I have ever
Sought to repay by friendship and advice
To this, his son, of whom you've daily sought
To work the ruin, since he crossed your path.

VON RIESENSTEIN.

All this proves nothing : speak more to the purpose.

FRANTZ.

I will. It seems you have been giving out
That he, leagued with the steward Weissenfels,
By plot, and scheme, and fraudulent intrigue,
Used more than lawful influence to gain
From one whose reason, you assert, had left him,
This same inheritance. Now, know the truth :
'Tis but a short year since, or thereabouts,
That I, one winter evening, sought this man,
And found him seated with a company
Of careless, gay companions like himself,
No man more free from cunning and design,
Or mindless of his private interests.
An hour later, our gay company
Had left us, and I spoke with him alone,
When at that moment came a messenger,
Enquiring Von Heyne out by name,
With news of old Von Altenberg's decease,
And this bequest. Till then, I never saw
Surprise and disbelief so strongly pictured
As in this man.

VON RIESENSTEIN.

No doubt, a clever scene,
With men who knew their parts, and played them well

FRANTZ.

Perhaps you doubt my testimony too ?
I fear me, you are wilfully unjust,
Well knowing what it is you say and do.
If I had ever known you, until now,
Display a strength of purpose like to this,
In anything might serve to do you honour,
As, scattering false friends from round your path,
On whom your private fortunes have been wasted ;
Or setting forth an independent spirit
Towards those in power to whom you have done homage,
And who have temporized and trifled with you ;
It might have better fitted, baron, with
This late-found overacted indignation,
That, to my thinking now, springs but from envy,
From avarice, and prejudice of class.

VON RIESENSTEIN.

Ah ! now I see whence comes your sudden anger.
If I had been a merchant now, forsooth,
Robbed and defrauded some few score of men,
Ruined the fortunes of some six or eight,
This had been honourable industry,
And I a good praiseworthy citizen.
But, for a gentleman to claim his own,
And trample on ambitious ruffians
Who dangerously infest society,
Why, this must be oppression and injustice !
Is it to tell me this that you are here ?
If so, methinks you might have spared your labour.

FRANTZ.

Indeed, it seems so ; if this were an error,
It shall be rectified as suddenly.
I will not justify myself to you ;
I stand alone, and need not your approval.
Go, and enjoy your honourable gains,

And leave the merchant to his petty craft ;
Henceforth our paths can lie more separate.

VON RIESENSTEIN.

'Tis well : let it be so. If this be all
The business that procures my house this honour,
I fear me I must leave you for awhile.
I have affairs that claim, just now, attention :
I bid you, then, good evening.

*[He bows ironically to FRANTZ, who makes an angry gesture
in reply, as he turns from him. Exit VON RIESENSTEIN.]*

FRANTZ (to THERESA).

Prepare yourself at once to leave with me ;
You hear what has occurred.

HELENE.

Stay, stay one moment !
For my sake, do not quit this house in anger.
This quarrel was so sudden, I have been
Confused, surprised, at all I have listened to.
Your words were harsh, and he replied in anger ;
Yet, tell me, may you not have been deceived ?

FRANTZ.

Listen, Helene ! 'tis just, 'tis natural,
You should think thus. I cannot feel surprised
If that you show some taint of prejudice
In which your youth, your childhood, has been reared.
You heard that I spoke freely all my thoughts
Here to your father ; let that be enough,
And, from this hour, your own path lies clear.
High fortune now is yours ; you were born to grace it,
To live admired, flattered, and caressed :
Enjoy all this, and think not on the means,
Enough to know, they were not of your seeking.

HELENE.

You do me wrong; there is some after-thought
In what you say. If there has been injustice,
It is not by my wish: but there is much
I cannot understand. Who is this man
Of whom we hear so much of doubtful meaning,
Of things which seem so opposite and strange?
What know you more of him than I have heard?

FRANTZ.

You heard the simple statements that I made,
And you yourself, I think, have seen the man
At different times, long since, here and elsewhere.

HELENE.

Yes, I remember well, and that there seemed
A kind of mingled interest and distrust,
As of some secret none could penetrate,
Regarding him, and wondered at the reason.

FRANTZ.

Who seeks to walk by unfrequented paths,
Although the main intent be just and good,
Lies open to the shafts of envious malice,
Which ever fears the most, that rivalry
It cannot understand. But to what purpose
Should I now speak of one who has gone forth,
In such a mad and desperate resolve,
To dare fate do the worst it can upon him?

HELENE.

Stay! If, indeed, your judgment has been true,
This is most sad; but is there yet no way
By which some tardy justice may be done?
Believe me, not an effort shall be spared.

FRANTZ.

It is too late, for I myself have tried
To change his purpose.

HELENE.

If you leave us now,
Think not, I pray you, upon this dispute
Between you and my father. You have been
Our valued friend till now ; do not remain
A stranger to us for what has occurred :
And I, at least, have not deserved your anger !

FRANTZ.

Now you are generous, my pretty cousin.
For your sake then, and for Theresa's here,
I will essay to reconcile myself
Unto Von Riesenstein ; though, as you know,
For my own interest, I need him not.
But I am weary now with travelling,
Else there were much I could relate to you,
Which might make clear what else to you seems doubtful.

HELENE.

Oh ! let it be so, and once more I beg
That what has happened here may not destroy
The friendship which has always, until now,
Prevailed between us, nor make you a stranger.
Let me know all there still remains to know
Of this strange history, when next we meet ;
Do not delay, although too much I fear
We can effect but little.

FRANTZ.

You shall know
Whatever I have heard, or can surmise,
Of this when next we meet. 'Tis a strange tale
Of mingled wisdom, folly, good and ill,

High aspirations, and mistaken means,
Wherein it may be you yourself have played
Some part. But it grows late, I need repose,
And I must leave you. Anger not your father,
Seeking to speak of this, until we meet.
Remember, fate is not in our control,
Though we may see to temper its decrees;
We can but play our parts; while, for the rest,
To the decrees of Providence we'll bend,
And read the moral,—when we see the end.

[*Exeunt.*]

END OF ACT THE FOURTH.

ACT THE FIFTH.

SCENE 1.

Outskirts of a rural Village. A rustic Inn a short distance in the background. (A period of seven years is supposed to have elapsed since the preceding events.) Enter WILHELM and a PEASANT.

PEASANT.

What! not another cup?

WILHELM.

No! not one more.

Why! would you have me lose my office, friend?
He whom I serve will brook no drunken varlets.

PEASANT.

Well, comrade, I am willing to confess
That, for the few months since you came among us,
You've seemed an honest, civil, worthy fellow,
Such as I love to see; but, for your master,
What he has been we know not, though we hear
Some strange things rumoured of him.

WILHELM.

Why, for that,
You know, and others know, all that concerns you;
Or if you would know more, go ask himself:
I know no secrets.

PEASANT.

Come, friend, no offence.
Your master is a worthy gentleman;

And if his humour be not social,
He has the right, and doubtless has the reason ;
But still, you know 'tis no great wonder if
Some of our neighbours show a kind of fear
To have to do with one who holds the power,
Where'er he got it from, so wonderful
As that which he has shown among us here
In sev'ral ways.

WILHELM.

Why ! is it not enough
To know that he asks nothing at your hands ?
What should he be ? Have not some of you cause
To thank him rather for the benefits
That he has done you ? Who has ever known
Good fruit spring from the evil tree ?

PEASANT.

Why, true !

We know 'twas he that cured old Reinhold's fever,
Dame Agnes' ague, and that showed us how
To drive away the murrain from our cattle
By ways that would have seemed simple enough,
Had any other used them ; that, besides,
When neighbours knew what he had done in these
And other things, and it was thought that he
Who could do such, must have much knowledge that
Might serve to many ends, there came to him
Many who would take counsel at his hands
In different matters.

WILHELM.

He denied himself
To none of those who sought him out at first,
Though doubtless 'twas mere curiosity
Which led them to him.

PEASANT.

Why, you see, 'tis this.
Sometimes this counsel that he gives to them,

They say, hath a strange smack of wisdom in't,
 Which seems to speak of past experience,
 Of knowledge gleaned in many different ways;
 And some have scrupled not to say of him,
 He would not thus obscure his different gifts
 In such a place as this, in such a garb,
 If there were not some more than common reason—
 That doubtless he has seen far more than suits
 Him to make known.

WILHELM.

Well, friend, don't tell me now
 What they have said, or you may anger me.
 I cannot find it wrong, indeed, that he
 Should grow impatient, now and then, to hear
 The tedious nonsense of these surly fools,
 And speak his thought, and so draw down on him
 Their causeless hatred, and their ill report.
 Or that, perhaps, as I have sometimes seen,
 Trying to teach them better, they should hate
 That which they have no wish to understand,
 As is the custom with their clodships ever.

PEASANT.

How now ! you grow less civil to your friends
 Than is your custom.

WILHELM.

If you'd have my friendship,
 Speak well of him whom I have had the honour
 To serve in better fortune.

PEASANT.

If reports
 Be true, you could not serve him well in worse.

WILHELM (*after a pause*).

Why, the worst stroke of the worst fortune, friend,

Is the ill company it brings us to ;
Then are my master's fortunes low indeed,
Which find him midst a most ungracious crew.
Little know they, indeed, who live in towns,
Of you and of your ways, if that they think
That you still lead the milk and honey life
Of which old poets sang in pastorals ;
That you are free from envy, know content,
Are neighbourly, true to your friends, and greet
The stranger with the open brow of welcome.
That there may be some such, I will believe,
But not in this vile place ; dull, thankless, gross,
And full of envious malice, are ye all ;
It is your common pastime to speak ill
Of all about you ; all the vices which
Are found in cities, dwell still more with you,
Without the same allurements and excuse.
Your lives are like those of the wretched swine
Ye herd amongst—not like the doves' or lambs' ;
And when ye would be festive and draw round,
And drain your cups of filthy liquor down,
Your muddy brains do gather nothing from
The draught ; no pleasant speech, or kindly thought,
E'er follows it ; your malice does but breed
From that which opens the hearts of other men.
And then ye sit, and slander every one ;
Slur over all the good ye know of each,
Guess and suggest the evil that ye know not.
Now go, and seek some of this company,
For here at once I rid you of my own.

[*Exit.*]

PEASANT.

I think some of the devils that, they say,
Do aid the master, have possessed the man ;
I never knew him in this mood before.
I will away, and say what I have heard.

[*Exit. Scene closes.*]

SCENE 2.

Interior of a poor Apartment, set out as for a student ; with books, a few philosophical instruments, &c. VON HEYNE, dressed in a student's gown, is discovered, seated at a table, with an open volume before him, which he is reading ; and a flask of water, from which he pours a little into a glass, and drinks with an air of depression and faintness. He rises and comes forward.

VON HEYNE (*speaking slowly*).

The day is far advanced. 'Tis almost time
To cast these sombre vestments, and to quit

[*Pointing to the books*]

These grave companions of my solitude,
To breathe the air upon the green hill's side ;
To walk abroad, and hail the bounteous sun,
And thank Him for the beams he shed on me
In early youth, which warmed my soul to life,
And gave me health and vigour, gladness, joy ;
And beg Him yet to grant me one poor ray,
To call back to my heart its early fires,
Which seem to wane of late, and leave me sad.

[*Pausing*].

My life is passing like this summer's day,
As profitless to me : the time is short ;
My slender means are drawing to a close,
And little now remains to me of youth ;
And this dull study, too, would weary me,
But that it gives already a foretaste
Of that same power to which it beckons on,
Which awes the vulgar, and leads, p'rhaps, some few

[*Smiling*]

To think it springs from more than mortal source ;—
Were this my cue. And who knows, by and bye,
What need may come ! Heaven knows, 'twere not the worst !
Now, Wilhelm, what's the news ? You have been long.

Enter WILHELM.

WILHELM.

I crave your pardon, sir, and will endeavour
So to offend no more.

VON HEYNE.

Of course, I know
Your presence here at all is proof enough
That you are true and honest.

WILHELM.

I have been
Conversing with some of our neighbours, whom
I found it difficult to quit, although
'Twas not the love of such dull company
That held me hence.

VON HEYNE.

Ah! what had they to say?
They talked about the coming harvest, p'rhaps,
The weather, and their little discontents,
And causes of complaint against the state,
That will not take their burdens for its own.
Was it not so?

WILHELM.

Why, sir, 'twas as you say,
A mixture of these things, together with
A few hard words that each spoke of his neighbour.

VON HEYNE.

And was this all?

WILHELM.

Why, yes; except, perhaps,
A kind of rumour that I overheard,
As I sat in the village winehouse here.

VON HEYNE.

Of public interest, or village scandal ?

WILHELM.

Why no, of neither ; it was merely this.

[*Pausing slightly.*]

You know that, some half league east of the village,
There stands an ancient building, much reduced
From what seems to have been its former state ;
For part of what it was now lies in ruins,
Yet still enough remains to indicate
Some wealth, or dignity, in the possessor.
You may remember, sir, that several times
You have surveyed it in the distance, and
Praised it to me as a most rare example
Of olden architecture.

VON HEYNE.

I remember.

Well, what of this ?

WILHELM.

And you have sometimes wondered
What kind of inmates it might hold, and whether
They were of the same stamp as these our friends
And neighbours of the village. Well, to-day
I met with some, who, amongst other matters,
Spoke of the mansion and its habitants.
I listened carefully to what fell from them,
And, without questioning, I yet found means
To gather this. For some five months or more,
In that old grange has lived a lady, who,
They say, is young and fair, yet ne'ertheless
Is thus content to court retirement here ;
Passing her time in deeds of charity ;
Showing benevolence to all around her ;
So much, it seems, that even the dull boors

Who dwell about us can forbear their malice,
 While thus they speak of her; and whom they spare
 Should be, I think, but little less than angel.
 Her name I did not hear: they say she is
 A stranger to these parts (I well believe it),
 And mourns for some near relative or friend.

VON HEYNE.

Your news is strange: few young and beautiful
 Find solitude so charming, or weep long
 For those they've lost: most dry their sorrows up,
 And learn to smile on those who yet remain.
 Trust me, you soon will hear some other story.

[*Aside.*]

Well! well! those who live here, or hereabouts,
 Are nought to me; too long I've lingered here.
 When will this wand'ring cease, that wearies me
 Till memory scarce serves me for the past.
 Wilhelm, can you remember now how long
 It is since last we looked on Altenberg?

WILHELM.

Yes, sir; 'tis nearly seven years since then.

VON HEYNE. (*Aside.*)

Some six or seven years of life! how passed?
 Sometimes in pleasant places, and with those
 Whose friendship for awhile made life seem sweeter.
 A moment after, vilified by fools,
 Thwarted by needless, petty enmities,
 Which grew, I knew not how. (*to WILHELM*) Tell me
 again,
 When accident caused us to lose each other
 At Ingolstadt, how long a time elapsed
 Before you found me in Bavaria,
 This winter past?

WILHELM.

'Twas five years, sir, I think.

VON HEYNE.

'Twas then you proved your honesty indeed :
You brought with you, and gave into my hand,
What treasure I had trusted to your charge,
Untouched. You found me in a poor disguise,
Clothed like a common serf—and yet, you knew me.

WILHELM.

Why, yes ! for once I played the honest man.
But keep my secret.

VON HEYNE.

[Sitting down at a table, and resting his head upon his hand, speaks slowly, as if to himself.]

And in that time of need, how had I fared ?
Was this the destiny decreed for me ?

[He remains silent, as if lost in thought. WILHELM approaches him.]

WILHELM.

Come ! come ! Von Heyne ; 'tis not like yourself
To be cast down like this. I've seen you calm
Amid fierce storms, unmoved in real dangers ;
Only of late like this. Arouse yourself ;
This study and abstemiousness must
Alone make sick the brain without the rest.
See here, a flask of wine ; drink but one glass,
'Tis Rhenish wine, and does not cloud the brain.

[He fills a glass with wine, and places it before VON HEYNE, who drinks.]

VON HEYNE.

I thank you for your thoughtfulness and care.
Enough ! that draught has done me friendly service.

[Rising and coming forward.]

I now shall walk abroad an hour or so

Before the sun be set. I will but seek
My cloak and sword, which lie i' th' inner room,
And you shall show the pathway through the vineyard
That I have heard you speak of: stay you here.

[*Exit.*]

WILHELM.

I would all this were ended; it is time,
I think, to leave so villanous a place.
I wonder what can keep Von Heyne here,
Except his narrow means, or want of purpose.
Here comes another of our friendly neighbours,
As I suppose.

Enter UMFRID.

Good day, my friend.

WILHELM.

I wish

The same to you, though I've seen few of late.
Nor am I yet your friend, until I know you.

UMFRID.

Well! you shall know me soon; my name is Umfrid.

WILHELM.

I have heard many better.

UMFRID.

Well, perhaps
There's many a finer one, that does belong
To those who lead no better lives than I.

WILHELM.

You speak, perhaps, of some who have employed you.
Well, you should know their ways; they planned ill matters
And set you on to do them.

UMFRID.

Well, I come
To do an errand here for one of them.

WILHELM.

What errand? and to whom?

UMFRID.

Why, I have brought
A message to your master.

WILHELM.

Who is he?

UMFRID.

Why, then, the stranger who came to these parts
A short while since. Do you not serve him?

WILHELM.

Well,
Perhaps I may, for want of better service.
What is your business with him?

UMFRID.

Is he within?
If so, go tell him I would speak with him.

WILHELM.

He is not always to be seen of late
By ev'ry clown that comes to pry and question.

UMFRID.

Well, I am come for neither; but, however,
I've no occasion now for your good will,
For, as I think, here comes he now himself.

Re-enter VON HEYNE.

VON HEYNE.

Well, Wilhelm, who is this?

WILHELM.

Some man that asks
For you, and will not say what is his business.

UMFRID.

Your pardon, sir; are you not the physician
That people speak of in the village here?

VON HEYNE.

I never have professed the art; but still
I have some knowledge, which has been of use
To the poor peasants here.

UMFRID.

Then it is you
Whom I would see. I come, sir, from my lady,
To whom the old grange, that you may have seen
Beyond the hill, a short mile from the village,
Belongs. We have a fellow-servant there,
Who, having fallen from a horse, is hurt,
And he who has been sent for from the village
Can give him no relief. The man has been
Long with my lady or her relatives,
And she is much distressed to see him suffer.
One of her servants, who by chance came here
But yesterday, had heard you spoken of,
And told his mistress all that he had learnt;
And I am sent in haste to find you out,
And beg you, in her name, to come at once
And use what skill you have to cure the man.

VON HEYNE (*reflecting*).

I do intend to leave these parts to-morrow,
And have, indeed, scarce one full hour to spare.
Besides, you say you have already tried

What benefit the village doctor here
Could do your fellow-servant ?

UMFRID.

Sir, we have.
But still I beg that you will not refuse ;
The man I left, cries out in bitter pain.
Should I return, and say, you cannot come,
I shall be thought t' have done my errand ill,
And come again with a more pressing message,

VON HEYNE.

And yet, I cannot work a miracle.
It may be that his hurt is of such nature
As that no human skill could work a cure.
Yet, say that I will come. God knows, I wish not
To turn away from one in agony,
If there be any such, indeed, so wretched
To look for help from me. I will but stay
To gather some medicaments I have.
We shall not need your aid to show the road.
Go you at once, and say, that I will come.

UMFRID.

I humbly thank you, sir.

VON HEYNE.

Prepare at once
What remedies you have against my coming.

UMFRID.

We will, sir.

[*Bows and exit.*]

VON HEYNE.

Well, 'tis but an hour lost !
One last good act I fain would do, for love

Of Heaven, that little recks, perchance, of me.

[*To Wilhelm.*]

When this man spoke with you before I entered,
Heard you his lady's name?

WILHELM.

Sir, I did not.

For he refused to answer any question
Until you came.

VON HEYNE.

I did not think to ask.

Well, well! it matters not. Go with me now,
And help me to collect some instruments
And what I am most like to want, and then
We'll take the nearest road.

[*Exeunt. Scene closes.*]

SCENE THE THIRD AND LAST.

*An Apartment in an old Mansion. Antique hangings and
furniture. A large window in flat, with sunset.*

HELENE and GERTRUDE discovered.

HELENE.

Well, Gertrude, have you asked, is Umfrid gone
To seek the stranger; as I gave direction?

GERTRUDE.

Madam, I saw him leave an hour since.

HELENE.

Then, p'rhaps, he is returned; go you and see.

[*Exit GERTRUDE.*]

Strange ! that I should not hear of this before.
And yet, they say, 'tis nearly two months since
He was seen here, accompanied by one
Who seems, if I can understand their meaning,
More like a rough companion than a servant.
Herr Geissmar ! I have never heard the name.
However, if he but possess the skill
To cure poor Siegfrid, 'tis enough for us.
I would not have it said the poor old man,
Who knew me from my childhood, perished here
For want of proper aid. (*Enter UMFRID.*) Well, Umfrid ! so
You have returned ; and did you give the message ?
And will he come, this gentleman ?

UMFRID.

Yes, madam.

He said that he would come ; and sent me on
That all might be prepared.

HELENE.

But does he know
The bye-road that leads hither from the village ?
He is a stranger here.

UMFRID.

Madam, he said
He knew the road, and waited but to seek
Some things he needed ; yet at first he seemed
As though he would refuse, but when I begged
More earnestly, he gave a hurried promise.
I think I hear strange voices in the hall.
Perhaps 'tis he already.

HELENE.

Go at once,
And say that I will see him here myself.
The sun is set ; let lights be placed at once.

UMFRID.

Yes, madam.

[*Exit.*]

Re-enter GERTRUDE.

Herr Geissmar is already here, my lady.
He is with Siegfried now, and bids me say
That he will wait upon you instantly.
His servant is below. I've something more
To tell you, madam, that I've just now heard,
If you will hear me speak.

HELENE.

What have you heard?

GERTRUDE (*drawing nearer*).

Why, Rudelhoff, one of the men below,
Who, as you know, was some years in the service
Of the old Count of Altenberg, swears to me,
By all most sacred, that this gentleman,
Whom he saw for a moment in the hall,
Is he who claimed at first to be the heir
To the estate. Do you remember, madam?
I've heard the story. He is altered now,
Much changed, he says, and wears a student's dress,
Not like those of this country; yet he knew him
The moment that he saw him.

HELENE.

Strange, indeed!

Bring Rudelhoff to me; yet, stay a moment.
You say, his servant has remained alone?
Go you and speak to him. No, go not yet,
There is no time, for I have sent to say
That I would see him here. (*Aside*) I would not wish
That he should know to whom he speaks at first,
'Till I can judge which way I ought to act.

[*Reflecting.*]

My walking dress—the veil I often wear
With it will serve me—'tis the only way.

[To Gertrude]

Poor girl! you well may wonder what this means,
But come at once.

[*Exeunt. Enter Servant with lights, which he places upon a table, and exit. Enter VON HEYNE and UMFRID.*]

UMFRID.

This way, sir. I was told my lady waited
To see you here; please you to rest a moment
Until she come.

VON HEYNE.

It is unnecessary;
I came not here for thanks or recompence.
Well, well! let it be so. I'll rest awhile.
Stay, I would speak with you a moment: tell me,
Do you not find this old and gloomy mansion
(Removed from the resort of visitors
Or passers by) a somewhat dull abode?

UMFRID.

'Tis likely, sir, strangers would find it so.

VON HEYNE.

Your lady, as I hear, is young and fair,
Is of good fortune, and of gentle blood.
How happens it, my friend, that such a one
Should pass her time in such a place as this?
You see, I am a stranger here: speak freely.

UMFRID.

Why, sir, it seems this was my lady's birthplace;
And, when her father died (whose residence
Was in the city then), she wished to pass
Some time apart from scenes of gaiety
And all her newer friendships, and revisit

Some of the old dependants of our master,
Whom she remembered from her infancy ;
Whose benefit and welfare she does think of,
As though they were her own. The saints reward her !
There is scarce one of us that would refuse
To give his life for her, if she but asked it.

VON HEYNE.

A rare exception, truly. One word more ;
I have not heard, as yet, your lady's name.

UMFRID.

See, sir ; she comes herself to speak with you.

[Re-enter HELENE (dressed in a kind of travelling costume, with veil) and GERTRUDE. VON HEYNE retires, left, a pace or two ; as she comes forward, they salute. UMFRID and GERTRUDE a little in the background.]

HELENE.

I have to thank you, sir, for having used
Such haste in answering my hurried message.

VON HEYNE.

Madam, you honour those whom you command.
I have already seen your servant, and
His hurt, I trust, is but of such a nature
That time, and some few simple remedies,
Will bring a speedy cure.

HELENE.

Oh ! I am glad
It is no worse ; I had feared otherwise.
I am, indeed, your debtor for the trouble ;
And now, I beg you, name your own reward.

VON HEYNE.

'Tis needless ; for I am no fee'd physician.
'Tis true, that at your bidding I am come ;

But 'twas to do the duty of each man
Unto a weak and suffering fellow-mortal.
May Heaven so help me in my time of need !

HELENE.

You'll pardon me, if I have been mistaken ;
I did not know of this : yet I am not
The less your debtor.

VON HEYNE.

Madam, I'm repaid
With simple thanks.

HELENE.

Perhaps there may be something
Which I might do to serve you : is it not so ?

VON HEYNE.

You'll pardon me. I know, indeed, of nothing.

HELENE.

Yet think again. I have some influence,
And many means of serving well my friends.
It may be that your fortunes are unworthy
A man of talent and benevolence.
Tell me how I may serve your interests.
Doubt nothing ; do not hesitate, but speak.

VON HEYNE.

Believe me, madam, I am not ungrateful.
And yet, although I speak upon reflection,
There's little I could ask ; unless, indeed,
I might presume to beg a kind of favour
Which, in a stranger, might seem something bold.

HELENE.

In anything even a friend might ask
You need not fear refusal.

VON HEYNE.

It is this.

Since I have been, even so short a time,
 Within these walls, it has been twice my chance
 To hear you spoken of, by those who serve you,
 In words of praise which might, indeed, do grace
 Unto the best and highest. Once before
 I heard the same from strangers. Pardon me:
 It is not that I would presume to flatter.
 You bid me ask a boon; lady, 'tis this:
 I fain would see the features that belong
 Unto a heart, a life, so pure and good,
 Would it but please you to remove your veil
 But for a moment—ere I take my leave?

[HELENE raises her veil. VON HEYNE starts, and, as if carried away by an uncontrollable impulse, sinks on one knee, removing his hat; he rises as if recovering from his emotion, retires, and remains uncovered.]

HELENE.

I think, Von Heyne, we have met before.

VON HEYNE.

Madam, I know it well.

HELENE.

And you have been
 In foreign lands, I've heard—is it not so?

VON HEYNE.

I have not been so near as I am now,
 For many years, unto my native place.

HELENE.

And are you going thither? You have friends
 In Heidelberg; or does our village please you?

VON HEYNE.

'Twas accident which led me thither first,
Uncertainty has held me there till now,
To-morrow's dawn, I leave it.

HELENE.

Then you go
To Heidelberg?

VON HEYNE.

I do intend so, madam.

HELENE.

Many of those who knew you formerly,
As I have heard, have looked for your return
Most anxiously, and doubtless will be glad
To see you take, once more, your place among them.

VON HEYNE.

I have small claims of friendship upon any,
Although some idle curiosity,
For which I vainly seek a better name,
May lead me to look once more on the city
Before I turn my back on it again.

HELENE.

You leave this country then? There may be lands
Where men win fortune perhaps more easily,
Which offer more, which give a fairer field
To talent or to worth: is it not so?

VON HEYNE (*hesitatingly*).

Madam, I do not know; but—it may be.

HELENE.

Then it is as I thought, and I am answered.
Listen to me, Von Heyne: you well know

I cannot be a stranger to events
Which passed some seven years since, when, as I heard,
You suffered some injustice. I will speak
Later of that. You turned away in anger,
And none, even of your old associates,
Knew where you went, or why—that we could hear;
But years have passed—and now—you have returned.

VON HEYNE.

How strange a thing, indeed, that I should do so!

HELENE.

The thought that you have uttered was not mine.
But you are changed, Von Heyne, and your look
Is pale and stern, your answers brief—distrustful.
Your mode of living in the village here—
These seem to tell,—I fear,—adversity——

VON HEYNE.

True! I have known adversity; what then?
My fortunes are my own; and I—have borne them.

HELENE.

There is displeasure in your look; think not
Mere curiosity leads me to speak,
But rather that I grieve if you have suffered,
And any of my name have been the cause.

VON HEYNE.

I scarcely looked for this! Madam, I fear
You do me too much honour, and yourself
Far too much wrong, to throw your speech away
Upon a man without a name or station.
Obscure, as you surmise, not fortunate,
Led to your gate by a mere accident,
Of whom in former years you knew, perhaps,
But little that could justify approval,

And who may since have earned no better name,
What claim have I to so much sympathy?

HELENE.

I do not know that you are such, or if
Your words are of humility or pride ;
I did but utter what I truly felt.
What else I have to say is quickly said,
And had been said ere this, had I been sure
That you were uninformed of what has passed.
You have not heard, then, that my father died
Some twelve months since, and all he then possessed
I have inherited, both of his own,
And all your friend, the Count of Altenberg,
Bequeathed to you : this last is justly yours,
And why it should have ever ceased to be so
I never knew, although Von Riesenstein
Thought otherwise ; and this I much regret,
For since my father's death I have heard much,
And now I know that you were wrongly judged.
It seems that this was known to many more,
And known so well, I have felt deeply grieved
That I should seem to profit by injustice,
Yet knew not how to act until this moment,
For many thought you dead in some strange land,
And that no other heir could now be found.
As I have said, all this is yours of right,
And shall be made at once so from this moment.
I much regret all that you have endured
From any cause, and feel some pain to think
That we should have remained so long your debtors.

VON HEYNE.

[Speaking deliberately, and looking in an inquiring and yet doubtful manner towards her.]

Madam, I heard you say some circumstance
Came to your knowledge : was this anything

Which could disprove, according to the law,
That which, you know, Von Riesenstein believed?

HELENE.

No formal evidence, more than you know of,
To disprove that which few believed ev'n then.
You hold all necessary proof yourself,
To which none other yet has been opposed.

VON HEYNE.

And is this all? Some doubt will still remain.
I have destroyed the testament you speak of,
My legal claim is gone; yet I am glad
So much was known to vindicate my name.

HELENE.

It matters nothing that you have destroyed
Your written title. I cannot possess,
Knowing what now is known, what is not mine.

VON HEYNE.

And would you have me to undo at last
One of those few acts which, of my whole life,
I now can look upon without regret;
For some, I heard, confessed the act was noble,
Although not worldly wise; for once men knew me—
One act was praised—I'll not undo it now.
Besides, I would not borrow from such means
What was denied unto mine own best efforts;
Yet sure my fate is hard and undeserved.
I was benevolent, sincere, and just—
I know, not faultless; but such faults were light
To what I saw around: it matters not.
If I have not won fortune, being such—
Won me, in all these years, some poor position
In which I might, with peace of mind, at last
Pass smoothly to an honourable end,

In spite of petty malice, and false judgment,
 Indirect slander, wilful misconception—
 Why, let me sink, and find a fitting end
 To this career of strife and suffering.

HELENE.

But why? Oh, do not speak so bitterly!
 Each word like this sounds like a deep reproach.
 Think not upon the time that's lost, for that
 Is past, and cannot be recalled; and now
 Is Providence unjust to you, or rather
 Does it not offer you, ev'n now, the means,
 The honourable means, would you but think so,
 To quit at once these painful wanderings,
 And take again your former rank?

VON HEYNE.

No! no!
 I know that pride has prompted you to this,
 Seeking to thrust me back the benefit,
 More than your sympathy with—such as I am.

[*Turning away.*]

HELENE.

No! stay! You say you have destroyed the deed
 From which you drew your title, and refuse
 To urge all further claim; you are resolved.
 And now, one question more before you go.
 Why did you kneel, Von Heyne?

VON HEYNE.

Pardon me;
 Surprise may influence a thought or action
 Which cold reflection shows us to be folly.
 I do not know why I should trespass longer
 Upon your time, and patience. I am glad
 T' have done the service for the which I came;
 And so, farewell!

HELENE.

Yet stay! reflect a moment,
Be not unjust to others. Lay aside
This false and gloomy pride; you cannot think
All are your enemies—it is not so.
I know adversity has privilege
To bear harsh and injurious thought of others,
Yet why reject the offices of friendship,
In doubt and disbelief, when it is found
Or, if this stern and proud resolve of yours
Be quite unchangeable, tell me, at least,
Before you turn away, what meant your manner
When first you saw and knew to whom you spoke?

VON HEYNE (*hesitating, and slowly returning*).

It was not difficult to read my thought.
It turned upon that hour when first I saw you.
You recognized me here; yet, had you not,
I should have gone my way without surprise.
My former self I had almost forgotten
Till now, when something brings the memory back.
Yes! it is true that we have met before
In other scenes, and then I felt the charm
Your presence gave, and then—you knew it well;
But, at that time, events came thickening fast.
You know the story of my going hence,
Of you not quite forgetful. But what then?
You were the daughter of Von Riesenstein,
Whose prejudice, whose pride, and harsher thoughts,
Might still be yours, tempered in outward seeming.
Why should I wonder, if it should be thus?
And time was past for doubt and dull regret.
I turned, and went my way; life's sterner duties
Came full upon me, and the daily proof
Changed doubt to disbelief in anything
That's pure and true: I had almost forgotten
What such belief might be. So, years have passed.

Chance led me here ; again I stand before you.
 But now, each one I speak to tells some tale
 Of excellence I'd learnt to think a fable.
 Time has not over-clouded that calm brow,
 Nor dimmed the steady lustre of thy gaze,
 And, as it met my own, my doubts dissolved,
 And all seemed true at last that long I'd thought
 But the creation of an idle brain.
 Mistake me not, (*retiring a step*) for now I know full well
 That such a shrine needs a fit worshipper.

HELENE.

Something of this, Von Heyne, I have heard,
 I therefore will not now affect surprise,
 I know this is no time for idle words ;
 You cannot so have changed in these few years,
 To be indifferent and reckless now.
 You are yet young, although you may have suffered,
 Why throw away the future in despair
 Because the past has been so profitless ?
 You spoke a moment since of other times ;
 What shall I say ? I too remember them.
 Say, can you not forget that time has passed,
 And be—all that you ever would have been ?

[*She has drawn closer to him while speaking, and now places
 her hand upon his arm ; he starts away.*]

VON HEYNE.

One moment stay ; you know not what I am,
 I am not as you knew me ; would I were.
 You think, perhaps, that in these years of strife,
 My trials and my dangers have but served
 To chasten and to purify the heart ;
 Or, rather, deem I have been ever true
 Unto my better, earlier, nobler nature.
 Now hear the truth—and turn away from me.
 Each generous purpose, and high-souled resolve,

Have left me in my long and stern ordeal,
 Mine honour lies all buried in the dust,
 I have become a common ruffian,
 My tongue is seared with oaths ; my lips defiled,
 Exchanging words of loathing and contempt
 With the detested and vile herd of those
 Adversity drew round ; malicious hearts
 Have roused at length the venom of my own,
 And desp'rately I have wrought wrong again.
 Thus, I have known the taint of many a sin,
 And my brain reels with crowding memories
 Of twenty lives, concentred into one.

[HELENE turns away, raising one hand as
 if to cover her eyes.]

Yes ! yes ! I know 'tis sad ; but hear me now,
 'Tis your's to judge between me and my fate :
 I have discharged my heart of its full burden,
 And stand condemned and penitent before you.
 I fear the past must separate us now,
 And the strong contrast of your fate and mine ;
 And yet, I know, all good proceeds from one ;
 And, knowing this, it cannot be a sin
 To fall and worship you ; as I do here.

[He kneels, and covers his face.]

HELENE.

Rise ! rise ! I had not thought, indeed, of this,
 And yet, 'tis but too natural a sequel
 To all the rest. Kneel not to me, Von Heyne !
 Those cannot judge you who have never known
 A single trial of adversity,
 And I, the least of all. Oh ! let me hope
 The very sharpness of your self-reproach
 Shows all not evil yet ; but let me know

[Speaking more rapidly.]

The worst ; and say, there lies no stain upon you
 Of crime against our laws. You have been weak

And faulty, but there is no deeper sin
 For which alone repentance cannot answer.
 Oh ! speak at once, and say ! say ! is it so ?

VON HEYNE (*hurriedly*).

No, no ! not that—not yet—it might have been.
 No ! there is none ; but is there not enough ?
 You have heard all ; do you not shrink from me,
 Ev'n while you pity ? Can there yet be hope ?
 See ! once again I worship good and truth,
 And think there is a providence on earth
 Which I've of late denied. But yesterday
 I had looked coldly on the darkest fate ;
 But now,—your words,—can you forgive me all ?
 No, no ! it is too much to ask—yet still
 Will you not answer me ?

HELENE.

Be calm, be calm !
 Think you I should have listened as I have,
 Unto a tale so wild and strange as this,
 Only at last to trifle with your sorrow ?
 I sadden while I hear : but, even yet,
 All may be well ; do but forget the past,
 And hope all from the future. I forgive
 All that is mine to pardon ; for the rest,
 Make your appeal elsewhere. Now, for this time,
 Enough of sorrow : you shall be my guest
 For a brief hour. Why should it not be so ?
 Are you not the physician to my household ?
 If you, indeed, abandon your intent
 To leave us now.

[*She extends her hand : VON HEYNE takes it.*]

VON HEYNE.

Ah ! ill befall me, lady,
 Should I now turn me from so bright a fate,

And tempt again the stormy sea of life,
When such a haven lures me to my rest.
How strangely accident has been my friend!
How long misfortune was my enemy!
Yet sweeter far is this my journey's end,
Because the way was toilsome; yet I know
My latter fate exceeds my own desert,
And merest chance has saved me from despair.
Then let no man e'er trust his fate to hazard,
Losing the present in uncertainty.
Let each press on, his destiny to meet;
Who waits for destiny, does but defeat.
Let each choose out some fix'd and settled state,
And strive with might to reach it, ere too late!

[*The curtain falls.*]

THE END.

